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Joe Biden installed 46th US President with Kamala Harris Vice-President

By Siva Sivapragasam

As snow flurries fell on the ground and cold winds swept across the lawns of the US capital building in Washington, an emotionally visible Joe Biden took his oath of swearing to become the 46th American President along with Kamala Harris, the first woman Vice-President and of Tamil descent.

The event also ended the previous four - year chaotic regime riddled with confusion and contradictions that nearly led the United States of America towards a nation of Divided States of America.

While threats of violence and riots loomed large before the inaugural, not a single incident was reported in any city thanks to the precautionary and safety measures taken by the security forces. Biden's inaugural speech highlighted the divisive nature in the country during the recent past and called for an end to this "uncivil war" and emphasized the need to heal and unify the nation.

The new US President Joe Biden



"Today is America Day. Today is Democracy Day. We must end this uncivil war – Joe Biden in his inaugural Speech

has rolled out a series of executive actions to address racial equality, a move to fulfill a key campaign promise that he made during his Presidential campaign.

President also signed an executive order that includes lifting the travel ban on several Muslim countries.

Biden's executive orders were largely applauded by human rights, racial justice, and legal groups across the country as a step towards national unity and the prevention of racial inequality.

The newly installed President has remarked that "Unity and healing

must begin with understanding and truth, not ignorance and lies."

President Trump's exit from the White House ended with no fanfare or flamboyance usually attributed to him. As Wendy, a republican from Trump's own party remarked "Trump has gone and hope he will stay gone."

Srikrishnan Subramaniam Pushed Us to Do and Be Better

Srikrishnan Subramaniam
April 14, 1945 – Feb 6, 2021

by Gary Anandasangaree

Srikrishnan Subramaniam, or Sri Anna as he was affectionately known, has played a pivotal role over the past thirty plus years in Canada. He challenged us to be better, to do better *Follow the full story on Pgs 24, 25 and 27*



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Ontario Takes Immediate Action to Stop the Spread of COVID-19 Variants

New six-point plan includes mandatory on-arrival testing for international travellers

January 29, 2021

Office of the Premier

TORONTO — The Ontario government is taking immediate and decisive action to stop the spread of new COVID-19 variants throughout the province. It is implementing a six-point plan which includes mandatory on-arrival testing of international travellers, enhanced screening and sequencing to identify the new variants, maintaining public health measures to keep people safe, strengthening case and contact management to track the spread of new cases, enhanced protections for vulnerable populations, and leveraging the latest data to inform public health decisions.

Details of the plan were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, and Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health.

“We welcome the new measures announced by the federal government today, but we need a stop gap to prevent new cases, including variant cases, from arriving in Ontario until those measures are fully in place,” said Premier Ford. “That’s why our government is taking immediate and decisive action, which includes mandatory testing of incoming international travellers and providing additional layers of protection for the people of Ontario, especially our seniors. Through our six-point plan, we intend to stop this virus in its tracks.”

Ontario’s first COVID-19 UK variant case was confirmed last month and was due to international travel. Since that time, 51 cases of the variant have been confirmed in the province. Evidence shows that the UK variant could be up to 56 per cent more transmissible. Recent evidence shows Ontarians’ efforts to contain COVID-19 are working, with provincial trends in most key public health indicators trending down. However, recent modelling suggests that the UK variant and other new variants remain a significant threat to controlling the pandemic and could become the dominant strain of



the virus in the province by March 2021, posing an increased threat to public health and hospital capacity.

“People across the province are staying home and helping to limit the spread of this deadly virus, and their actions are starting to make a difference,” said Minister Elliott. “However, the UK variant is now making its way into our communities and putting Ontario’s pandemic response at risk. In addition to maintaining the public health measures we know work and keep us safe, our government is taking decisive action to control the spread, protect our health care system, and save lives.”

Ontario’s six-point variant action plan enhances the existing coordinated and ongoing efforts of the province to detect, track, trace, and contain the spread of COVID-19. The plan includes:

Mandatory Testing of Travelers:

To address the risks associated with variants of concern to the health of Ontarians, the Chief Medical Officer of Health is issuing a Section 22 order under Section 77.1 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, mandating on-arrival testing for international travellers at Toronto Pearson International Airport effective at 12:01 p.m. on February 1, 2021 and exploring additional testing measures at Pearson International Airport and land border crossings in the coming weeks.

Enhanced Screening and Sequencing: Led by Public Health Ontario, the provincial diagnostic lab network is ramping up capacity to screen all positive COVID-19 tests in Ontario for known variants within two to three days of initial processing. This new measure will take effect as of February 3, 2021. Public Health Ontario (PHO) will also undertake and coordinate genomic sequencing efforts to identify new and emerging variants by sequencing up to 10 per cent of all positive tests by February 17, 2021.

Maintain Public Health Measures: Given the emerging evidence that the variants of concern are more transmissible and may cause more severe disease in some individuals, lifting of public health and workplace safety measures will not be considered at this time until more information on variant spread is known and overall trends in public health indicators improve. The declared provincial emergency and stay-at-home order were recently extended until February 9, 2021.

Strengthen Case and Contact Management: The provincial workforce will continue supporting public health units to ensure cases and contacts are reached as soon as possible and monitored through their quarantine period. All asymptomatic contacts will be asked to repeat testing on or after day 10 of their quarantine, and

the entire household of all contacts and symptomatic individuals will be asked to stay home until the contact has a negative test.

Enhancing Protections for Vulnerable Populations: Dependent on supply from the federal government, the province will continue with the accelerated vaccination of residents in long-term care, high-risk retirement and First Nations elder care homes. The province is also introducing a provincial antigen screening program for the expansion of rapid testing in high priority settings, such as long-term care homes, retirement homes, essential workplaces, schools and congregate living settings.

Leveraging Data: The province will work with a made-in-Ontario technology company DNASTack to immediately establish a genomics databank and real-time analytics dashboard to empower the province’s public health officials and improve the government’s planning related to pandemic response. This will enhance the province’s capacity to identify known and emerging variants of COVID-19.

“Urgent action is required to protect Ontarians from the new COVID-19 variants. That is why our government is implementing a six-point plan which includes mandatory on-arrival testing of international travellers starting next week,” said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. “We continue to urgently call on the federal government to impose a temporary travel ban on flights coming from countries where new COVID-19 variants are being detected.”

Ontario continues to monitor the developing situation with the Public Health Agency of Canada and other jurisdictions to ensure coordinated, effective and shared efforts to protect and safeguard the public. It remains critically important that all Ontarians continue following the stay-at-home order and public health advice and measures to protect our communities and most vulnerable populations, and to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Via news.ontario.ca

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Black History Month 2021:

Let us not be bystanders by actively advocating for positive change for Black Canadians during Black History Month and onwards

By **Harrish Thirukumar**

With February now upon us, it is a time where Ontario, Canada, the United States, and other parts of the globe mark the beginning of Black History Month 2021. In the Canadian context, it is an annual occasion where Canadians come together to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Black Canadians and their communities who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada the culturally diverse, compassionate, and prosperous nation it is today. Considering the circumstances that we now live in due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these celebrations, events, and commemorations will largely take place in the virtual space as opposed to previous years. As the health situation can arguably be attested to, prosperity has seemed to become even more elusive for Black people in Canada and abroad for that matter this past year. This is all the more reason to remember the importance of Black History Month and push on forward the values it represents for Black people and other communities in terms of diversity and inclusion within various societies.

Alongside COVID-19, this past year of 2020 has been marked by too many instances of racial injustices, especially against Black people. The most visible of this issue was in May when George Floyd, an African American man, was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was an act of police brutality that has been all too familiar for Black people in the United States and elsewhere.

As reiterated by Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development in a Toronto Star op-ed piece, Black Canadians themselves have paid close attention to all of this, knowing that Canada does continue to live with racism, discrimination, and implicit bias. This includes young Black Canadian boys who are often profiled by law enforcement and Black Muslim women being targeted for their looks and religious clothing. However, the incident involving George Floyd represented that anti-Black racism can still be as blatant and overt in its occurrence. Accordingly,

Minister Hussen acknowledges that we as Canadians have much to work on ahead for Black people to continue making history in Canada.

This alludes to the theme for the Black History Month 2021 campaign that is being spearheaded by the Government of Canada alongside with its other policy and program initiatives to support the wellbeing of Black communities in Canada. "The Future is Now" is a chance to celebrate and acknowledge the transformative work that Black Canadians and their communities are doing now. For Black History Month in the City of Toronto, this includes the City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) unit using their Twitter account, https://twitter.com/CABR_Toronto, to highlight the great work being done by some of the community-based agencies and groups that the City has partnered with to support Black residents in need throughout the pandemic. This and many other virtual events will be organized to reflect on Black History and learn about the contributions that Black Canadians have made and continue to make in shaping society from the Greater Toronto Area to Canada overall.

Streaming television and film are also considered great ways to commemorate Black History Month 2021, which in itself has been a popular pastime activity as most of us stay at home due to the pandemic. As such, I had the opportunity to watch *Fences*, a film adaptation of the 1985 play by late African American playwright, August Wilson, starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis. A drama set in 1950s Pittsburgh, it focuses on an African American family and their experiences in the United States of America, especially in the face of matters like racism and race relations. I would highly recommend it for your next film viewing on Netflix and as a way to commemorate Black History Month 2021.

More importantly though, with racial injustice continuing to rear its ugly head today, let us do what we can in a safe and sound manner to not be bystanders by actively advocating for positive change for Black Canadians during Black History Month and onwards.

Canada Historic Milestones

Black Activism in Canada

Before the #BlackLivesMatter movement, there was Stanley Grizzle.

Grizzle's decades of labour and civil rights activism drew attention to important equity issues. He was only 20 when, in 1938, he helped to establish the Young Men's Negro Association of Toronto. This was just his first foray into political activism. Working as a railway sleeping-car porter, one of the only jobs available to Black men in this era, he lobbied against racial discrimination and founded the Railway Porter's Trade Union Council. In this portrait by artist William Stapleton, Grizzle is pictured in his robes of office as a citizenship judge. The groundbreaking appointment was one of the many "firsts" in his life.

We preserve Grizzle's vast collection of material documenting Black history in Canada and Grizzle's lifetime of activism: <http://ow.ly/Z5Ou50DudCZ>



The fight for racial equality in Canada is not new; it is built on the work of many people, across multiple generations.

Learn about Canadian change makers in our blog "Pushing Back: The Ongoing History of Black Activism in Canada": <http://ow.ly/kIsA50DudD1>

(via: *Library and Archives Canada*)

Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.

- Vince Lombardi - (June 11, 1913 - September 3, 1970) American football coach



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Further Action Needed to Protect the Border and Stop the Spread of COVID-19

Ontario Makes Steady Progress Testing Travellers at Pearson Airport

January 26, 2021

Office of the Premier

TORONTO — Over 6,800 international travellers have been tested for COVID-19 as part of the Ontario government's voluntary and free border testing pilot program at Toronto's Pearson International Airport. This program was implemented to help quickly identify and stop the spread of COVID-19 in the province. Despite this steady progress, the province is calling on the federal government to take further action to protect the border, including mandatory testing of all incoming international passengers and a temporary ban on direct flights from countries where new variants are detected.

Details were provided today at Pearson Airport by Premier Doug Ford and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

"While we've made steady progress through this pilot program, thousands of people continue to pass through Pearson every week without being tested, creating a real risk to all Ontarians," said Premier Ford. "That's why, in addition to pre-departure testing, we're asking the federal government to adopt mandatory testing upon arrival for all international travellers and impose a temporary ban on flights coming from countries where new COVID-19 strains are being detected. Until vaccines are widely available, we all need to do our part to stop the

spread of this virus and that means tighter controls at our border."

On January 6, in partnership with the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, Ontario began offering COVID-19 testing at Pearson Airport for incoming international travellers who are staying in the province for at least 14 days. Since its launch, over 6,800 tests have been collected. For those participants that have received confirmed results from an Ontario lab, 146 cases, or 2.26 per cent, have tested positive. Participants receive their results within 24 to 48 hours of completing the test. The pilot program is working to detect positive cases even with the federal pre-departure requirement for travellers bound to Canada. Recent data shows that 1.8 per cent of all COVID cases are related to international travel.

Ontario is further calling on the federal government to strengthen enforcement of quarantine measures, including exploring new approaches that have worked in other jurisdictions, such as isolation hotels, to ensure compliance with the 14-day minimum quarantine requirement for incoming travellers.

"Ontario's border testing pilot program is helping us to trace and isolate COVID-19 cases early among travellers arriving in Ontario," said Minister Elliott. "In the meantime, we are in continuous contact with our federal partners to advocate for



further measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, protect our borders, and most importantly, the health and safety of Ontarians."

Ontario's first COVID-19 UK variant case was confirmed last month and was due to international travel. As other new variants are being detected globally, the Ontario government is calling on the federal government to impose a temporary ban on direct flights from countries where new variants are detected, including Brazil and Portugal. Banning flights with multiple stops in countries with a known variant should also be considered. This ban would be consistent with the prudent measures announced by the United Kingdom and several other countries, and the restrictions would remain in place until more is known

about these new variants.

"Airport testing is yet another tool we are using to help fight the spread of COVID-19, especially with several, more contagious variants coming from other countries," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "We continue to urge all Ontarians to follow public health guidelines and stay home, stay safe, and save lives."

The province continues to work with the Public Health Agency of Canada and other jurisdictions to monitor the developing situation. Ontario will continue to coordinate and support efforts to protect the public to ensure all effective measures are in place, including increased staffing, enhanced screening measures and follow-up measures, as appropriate.

Via news.ontario.ca

Canada and Ontario invest in accessible public transit infrastructure for residents of Peel Region

January 27, 2021

Infrastructure

REGION OF PEEL — The safety and well-being of Canadians are top priorities of the governments of Canada and Ontario. Investments in Ontario's infrastructure during this extraordinary time provides an opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and to make our communities more inclusive and resilient.

That is why, together, these governments are taking decisive action to help families, businesses and communities as they adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ontarians need safe and reliable public transit to get to work and home, to appointments, to shop for essentials, and to conduct business. Strategic investments in accessible public transportation infrastructure play a key role in delivering this service.

Today, The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Canada's Minister of Infrastructure and Communities; Sylvia

Jones, Solicitor General of Ontario and Member of Provincial Parliament for Dufferin-Caledon, on behalf of The Honourable Laurie Scott, Ontario's Minister of Infrastructure; and Nando Iannicca, Regional Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation of the Regional Municipality of Peel, announced funding for two projects that will modernize and improve accessibility for Peel Region's public transit system.

The Government of Canada is investing more than \$3.5 million in these projects through the Public Transit Infrastructure Stream (PTIS) of the Investing in Canada plan. The Government of Ontario is providing close to \$3 million, and the Region of Peel is contributing more than \$2.3 million.

One project involves the replacement of existing specialized transit buses with 69 new, specialized, 8-metre buses as the current fleet reaches the end of its planned service lifecycle.



The new propane-powered buses, with side-mounted lift, will provide accessible transit in Brampton, Mississauga, and Caledon, and are capable of carrying as many as six wheelchair passengers.

The second project involves the adoption of the PRESTO electronic fare collection system across the Regional Municipality of Peel's TransHelp fleet. This project includes the design, planning, purchase and hard-

ware installation of up to 145 portable, tablet-based, electronic payment units.

These projects will result in increased capacity, and improved quality, safety and access to the public transit system in the Region of Peel.

All orders of government continue to work together for the people of Ontario to make strategic infrastructure investments in communities across the province when needed most.

Via news.ontario.ca



CANADA NEWS

Ontario Adjusts Vaccination Plan in Response to Pfizer-BioNTech Shipment Delays

Vaccinations for the Province's Most Vulnerable to be Accelerated

January 25, 2021

Office of the Premier

TORONTO — The Ontario government is accelerating the vaccination of residents in long-term care, high-risk retirement, and First Nations elder care homes by a new target date of February 5, 2021. To protect access to second doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for those who have already received their first dose, Ontario will maintain the maximum interval of 21-27 days for long-term care, retirement and First Nations elder care home resident groups and up to 42 days between the two doses for all other groups. These adjustments are being made following notification by the federal government of reductions in Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine shipments.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, and General Rick Hillier (retired), Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force.

"Due to the delay in the next shipment of Pfizer vaccine doses, we are ensuring all available supplies are redirected to those who need them most: our residents in long-term care and retirement homes," said Premier Ford. "I know this will mean that some people may have to reschedule their vaccine appointments, but it is critical that our most vulnerable seniors receive the protection they need as soon as possible."

On January 19, 2021, the federal government notified the province of further reductions in Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine shipments. Ontario will not receive vaccine deliveries for the week of January 25, 2021 and will receive just over 26,000 doses for the first weeks of February. As of today, Ontario has not been provided its allocation for the weeks of February 8, 2021 and February 15, 2021, creating



further uncertainty for the province's vaccine rollout.

In response to the significant reduction in distribution by the federal government and the uncertainty of future shipments, the province and vaccination sites have worked together to develop a plan to accelerate vaccination of the province's most vulnerable. Second doses will continue to be administered based on availability of supply provided by the federal government. Actions being taken include:

Accelerate vaccination of the most vulnerable populations across Ontario with the goal of visiting each home in the province to administer first doses by February 5, 2021, pending week of February 1, 2021 delivery dates.

Doses of the Moderna vaccine will be reallocated to 14 public health units to ensure vaccines are administered at each long-term care home in the province.

"Despite ongoing challenges with supply, together with our partners, we continue to vaccinate our most vulnerable as quickly as possible, and we continue to be ready to administer vaccines to Ontarians as soon as we receive them from the federal government," said Minister Elliott. "Until there is sufficient supply to vaccinate every Ontarian who wants to receive one, we continue to urge everyone

to stay home and continue to follow public health measures."

Ontario's initiative to vaccinate northern, remote First Nations communities will also continue. To date, 760 doses have been delivered by Ornge to Sioux Lookout, with 568 doses administered by Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre and 45 doses administered by Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA). Ornge has also delivered 680 doses to communities across James Bay Coast, with 575 doses administered or scheduled to be administered to remote fly-in First Nations communities, including 100 staff at Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) vaccinated with a first dose. In February, Ornge will lead Operation Remote Immunity, to roll out the vaccine to 31 fly-in communities.

"We are working diligently with our partners to ensure vaccines continue to reach our Phase 1 priority populations, despite limited supplies from the Federal Government," said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. "It is critical that Ontarians continue to follow public health measures to ensure we limit the spread of COVID-19 and keep our communities safe."

The government is ready to administer the COVID-19 vaccine and expand the

number of vaccination sites as soon as doses are received. Ontario has capacity to vaccinate nearly 40,000 people per day and is building capacity to triple or quadruple that capacity pending federal government supply.

"We continue to push forward with our vaccination efforts across the province to ensure our frontline health care workers, remote First Nations and vulnerable populations are protected," said General (Ret'd) Rick Hillier. "We will be ready to ramp up our efforts once again when more doses become available."

Today, the government extended the declared provincial emergency for another 14 days. The declaration of emergency made under section 7.0.1 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA), originally declared on January 12, 2021, will now expire on February 9, 2021, unless extended further. All orders under the EMCPA, including O. Reg 11/21 (Stay-at-Home Order), O. Reg 8/21 (Enforcement of COVID-19 Measures) and O. Reg 13/21 (Residential Evictions) were also extended. Orders under the Reopening Ontario Act (ROA) continue to be in force.

Via news.ontario.ca

Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford delivers statement marking Thai Pongal on January 31, 2021

On January 31, 2021, Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford delivered a statement marking the occasion of Thai Pongal as the Canadian Tamil community in Ontario comes together to celebrate:

"Friends, I want to extend my best wishes to everyone at the Thai Pongal and Heritage Month celebration. Thai Pongal is a time to give thanks and to welcome in the new year.

May this year bring peace and prosperity to you and your families. Despite the festival being virtual, I hope that your celebrations are filled with joy and happiness, as you celebrate the Tamil community's achievements. I also want to thank the Canadian Tamil Congress for hosting this event and for being a



strong voice for Tamil Canadians.

I hope everyone has a wonderful celebration. Thank you and God bless."

This statement was delivered at the virtual Thai Pongal event held by the Canadian Tamil Congress on January 31, 2021.

Reader Responses about "Monsoon Journal"

Comments received on January 2021 New Year issue

"Thank you, Siva. You have a nice publication in Monsoon Journal! Interesting contents with super editing! Grateful for working with us. Thank you again and best wishes for the New Year."

Sincerely

Kumar

Kumar Nadesan - Managing Director, Express Newspapers (Ceylon) Ltd.

"That's a very colorful print for the front page and good for this monthly journal which depicts all events of the Sri Lankan community. Makes me incredibly happy & humbled to be a part of it, in the first issue and looking forward to continue to support this journal as much as I can."

Special appreciation for the editors & it's management team."

K. N. Sivagnanasuderam

"Monsoon Journal" always carries Key News + Good Articles, with High Standard of Journalism, in a real "MONSOON" Style! . Well Done & Keep up the Momentum in Future too! Best Wishes to M/s. Siva Sivapragasam & Logan Velumailum. Cheers!"

T.Sivayogapathy (Lord Siva) - Toronto

T. Sivayogapathy

February 4th World Cancer Day

McMaster University Aging Portal suggests reducing three risks for Cancer

February 4, 2021, was World Cancer Day, a day to inspire change and mobilize people to action all year long. The theme of this year's campaign is, "I Am and I Will" – a commitment to take actions both big and small to reduce your chances of getting cancer. In Canada, cancer is the leading cause of death, but the good news is that up to 50% of all cancer cases are preventable. You can reduce your risk by improving key lifestyle factors, including your diet, the amount of activity you do, and by eliminating harmful substances.

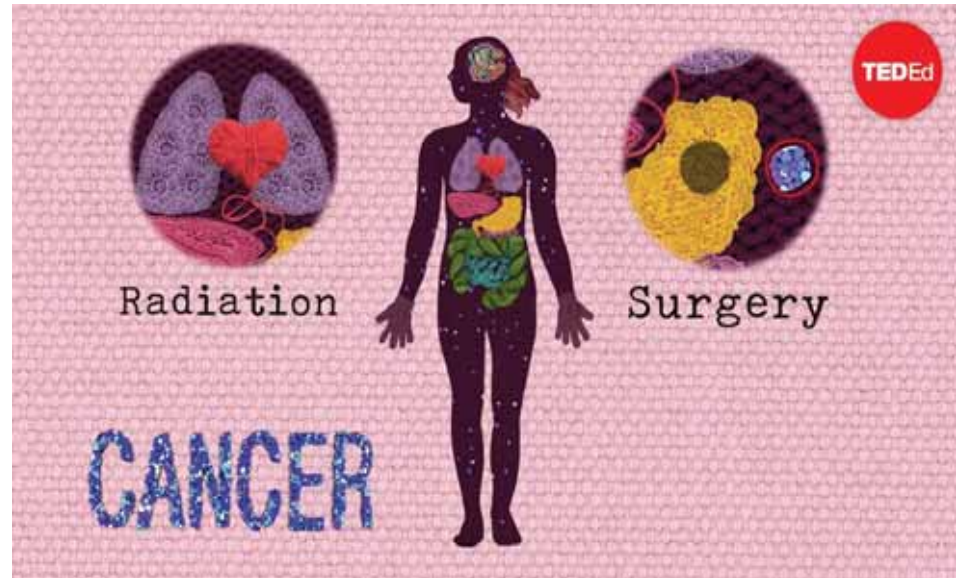
Eat a healthy, balanced diet

We all know we should eat our veggies, but did you know that doing so could cut your risk of developing cancer? Along with promoting health and well-being, and helping to control body weight, eating a healthy diet can lower your chances of developing cancer as you age. Are you already eating balanced, nutritious meals and snacks, or is your diet in need of a makeover? It isn't too late to make a change. By

incorporating more vegetables, fruits, and fibre into your diet, while reducing red meats and processed foods, you can reduce your risk of cancer.

Exercise regularly

Numerous studies have confirmed the benefits of regular physical activity for older adults. Having an active lifestyle can help improve things such as balance and decrease your risk of chronic conditions such as cancer. While the pandemic has made it challenging to stay active as gyms and other exercise facilities have had to close, there are still ways to get moving. Whether it be engaging in a virtually led fitness class like Yoga or Pilates from home or walking outdoors (remembering to maintain a safe distance of 2 meters from people outside of your household), regular physical activity has numerous health benefits for both your body and your mind. Try incorporating at least 30-minutes of activity into your day and reap the benefits, while helping to reduce your cancer risk.



Limit alcohol consumption

For many people, alcohol is considered one of life's pleasures – enjoying a cold beer on a hot day, or a glass of wine with dinner. But too much of a good thing can have bad consequences. There is a link between alcohol and serious diseases, including cancer, especially head and neck cancers (particularly involving the oral cavity),

liver cancer, esophageal cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer. Avoiding alcohol altogether is your safest option, but if you choose to drink, follow the recommended guidelines: no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two a day for men.

(Courtesy: McMaster University Aging Portal)

Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar says fulfilling expectations of the Tamil community is in Sri Lanka's own interest

India's Foreign Minister Dr.S.Jaishankar recently told Indian Parliamentarians that fulfilling the expectations of the Tamil people for equality, justice and peace within a united Sri Lanka will be in own interest of the island nation.

In response to a question in Rajya Sabha, Mr. Jaishankar said he reiterated India's support for the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka during his discussions with its top leaders in Colombo last month, the PTI reported.

"It is in Sri Lanka's own interest that the expectations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka are fulfilled," he said. "That applies equally to the commitments made by the Sri Lankan government on meaningful devolution, including the 13th Amendment to the Constitution," the Minister said.

The 13th amendment provides for devolution of power to the Tamil community. India has been pressing Sri Lanka to implement the 13th amendment fully which was brought in after the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement of 1987.

Mr. Jaishankar held discussions with Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapakse, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena during his visit to Colombo from January 5-7.

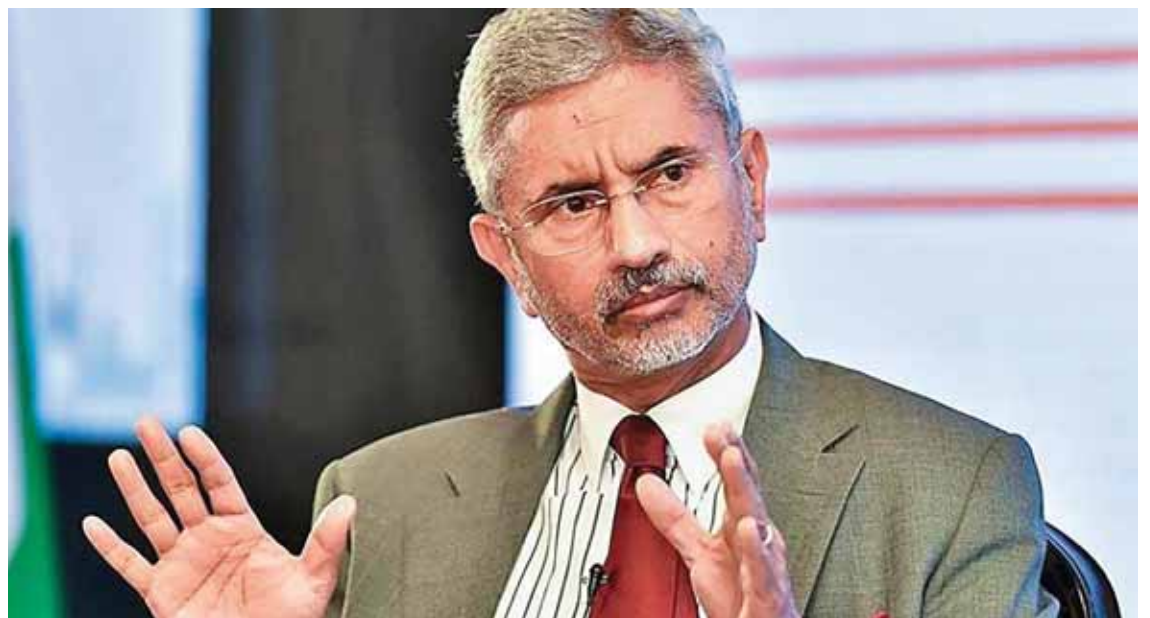
"During my discussions, I reiterated

that India's support for the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka is longstanding, as indeed for an inclusive political outlook that encourages ethnic harmony," he said in his written response.

The External Affairs Minister said India has consistently called upon Sri Lanka during bilateral discussions at all levels to fulfill its commitments on addressing the issues related to protecting the interest of Tamils in that country.

"India continues to remain engaged with Sri Lanka at all levels in its efforts to build a future that accommodates the aspirations of all sections of society, including the Sri Lankan Tamil community, for a life of equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka," he added.

The issue had figured during a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapakse in September last.



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WORLD NEWS

Global Tamil Forum says 'Vanakkam' to Kamala Harris, US Vice-President



The London based Global Tamil Forum (GTF) has delivered a congratulatory message to US Vice President Kamala Harris, through one of her close associates. There was also a message to US President Joe Biden.

The GTF noted that "We as Tamils of Sri Lankan origin are particularly proud, as Kamala Harris a person of Indian and Tamil origin, who was shaped by an enlightened grandfather and an extraordinary mother with cultural heritage, will occupy the second most powerful position of the most powerful country in the world. No doubt it will inspire our children and

grandchildren for years to come and we have already added "chithi" into the vocabulary with a sense of pride and reverence."

"Chithi" in Tamil means mother's younger sister, or father's younger brother's wife, or father's second wife in Tamil. In Indian English, it may refer to aunty (friendly older woman).

Kamala earlier admitted that her grandfather Gopalan from the village of Thulasenthipuram had a proud influence on her, and was her mentor and her walks with him in Besant Nagar, Tamil Nadu shaped her thinking at a very young age.

Sri Lanka:

'Forced' cremation of COVID victims' bodies must stop - UN rights experts

25 January 2021

Human Rights

The Sri Lankan Government should end its policy of compulsorily cremating victims of COVID-19, independent UN human rights experts said on Monday.

In a joint appeal, Special Rapporteurs Ahmed Shaheed, Fernand de Varennes, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule and Tlaleng Mofokeng, said that the practice ran contrary to the beliefs of Muslims and other minorities.

It ran the risk of increasing prejudice, intolerance and violence, they said in a statement, insisting that no medical or scientific evidence indicated that burying the deceased increased the risk of spreading communicable diseases such as COVID-19.

To date, more than 270 COVID-19 deaths have been reported in Sri Lanka; a significant number have come from the minority Muslim community.

All of the deceased were cremated in line with amended health guidelines for COVID-19 patients, which were issued on last March.

'Aggressive nationalism'

"We deplore the implementation of such public health decisions based on discrimination, aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism amounting to per-



secution of Muslims and other minorities in the country" the experts said.

"Such hostility against the minorities exacerbates existing prejudices, intercommunal tensions, and religious intolerance, sowing fear and distrust while inciting further hatred and violence", they added.

"We are equally concerned that such a policy deters the poor and the most vulnerable from accessing public healthcare over fears of discrimination", they said, noting that it would further negatively impact the public health measures to contain the pandemic.

'Immediate' cremation

Information received by the experts indicates that cremation often takes place immediately after test results are provided, without granting family

Gifting of COVISHIELD vaccines from India to Sri Lanka

Full Text of Media Release, by: Consulate General of India in Sri Lanka, Jaffna, Sri Lanka



28 January 2021:

Under Government of India's #VaccineMaitri, India will gift 500,000 doses of made in India COVISHIELD vaccines to Sri Lanka. The consignment will be transported in a special Air India flight on 28 January 2021 and packed in tailor-made boxes for the purpose. This will be ceremonially handed over by High Commissioner Gopal Baglay at the Bandaranaike International Airport.

2. In a remarkable coincidence, the consignment of COVISHIELD vaccine will arrive on the auspicious Duruthu Poya Day. As such the High Commissioner, who had first arrived in Sri Lanka to take up his assignment in the Vesak Week in May 2019 with 12.5 tons of medical supplies as gift by India to Sri Lanka for fighting COVID-19 pandemic, will pray at the sacred Gangaramaya Temple for the health and well being of the people of Sri Lanka on the Day. He will also seek the blessings of Ven. Dr. Kirinde Assaji Thero. As per the Buddhist traditions in India and Sri Lanka, High Commissioner will offer meals to devotees at the Temple.

3. Oxford-Astrazeneca's COVISHIELD vaccine is manufactured by Serum Institute of India. This has been approved for emergency use by Government of Sri Lanka.

members reasonable time or the opportunity to cross check or receive the final test results.

There have been several cases of cremations based on erroneous information about COVID-19 test results, the experts said.

They noted that the President and Prime Minister had instructed the health authorities to explore options for burials in Sri Lanka.

Disregard

"However, we are concerned to learn that the recommendation to include both cremation and burial options for the disposal of bodies of COVID-19 victims by a panel of experts appointed by the State Minister for Primary Health Services, Pandemics and

4. The gift from India is keeping in line with India's continued support to Sri Lanka in fighting the COVID pandemic. Four consignments of medical supplies weighing around 25 tonnes were donated by India, which also organised online experience-sharing programmes for Sri Lankan medical professionals. The two partners have also put up a joint front in the COVID-19 battle with India and Sri Lanka being the largest contributors to the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for SAARC. Prime Minister Modi had complimented Sri Lanka's leadership on containing the pandemic.

5. Guided by 'Neighbourhood First' and SAGAR policies, about 5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been gifted to neighbouring countries, and those in the Gulf and Indian Ocean since 20 January 2021. Millions of doses of made in India COVID vaccines have also been exported to countries as far away as Latin America and West Asia, and will continue to reach those in the Caribbean and the Pacific too. In September 2020, Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi told the UN that India's vaccine capacity will be used to help all humanity fight the COVID pandemic. India, which is called the 'Pharmacy of the World', supplied essential medicines to fight COVID-19 to 150 countries, more than half of which was as gift.

COVID Prevention, was reportedly disregarded by the Government", they said.

"We strongly urge the Government of Sri Lanka to stop the forced cremation of COVID-19 bodies, to take all necessary measures to combat disinformation, hate speech and stigmatization" of Muslims and other minorities, "as a vector of the pandemic, and to provide remedy and ensure accountability for cremations that were carried out by error."

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council and are neither UN staff nor paid for their work.

Via news.un.org



HISTORICAL LAND LINK BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

Underwater Research to Determine When and How Adam's Bridge was Formed

By OUE Research Institute



The Central Advisory Board on Archaeology, a body under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), approved the underwater exploration project's proposal last month. The study will focus on the process behind the formation of Ram Sethu. It will ascertain whether there are any submerged habitations around Ram Sethu. The research vessels of NIO, Sindhu Sadhana or Sindhu Sankalp, will be used in this project.

The Indian government has nodded to an underwater research project to determine Ram Sethu's origins, a 48-km-long chain of limestone shoals between India and Sri Lanka. Ram Sethu, also known as Rama's Bridge or Adam's Bridge or Nala Sethu, is located between Rameswaram Island south-eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, India, and Mannar Island, off the north-western coast of Sri Lanka. The bridge holds religious significance because of the Ramayana - one of the two major Hindu epics of ancient India. The Central Advisory Board on Archaeology, a body under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), approved the underwater exploration project's proposal last month.



Hindu Mythology

Lord Ram is the subject of the epic mythological Hindu text, the Ramayana. Supposedly set c 1.7 million years ago and written by Valmiki, Ramayana, Ram Sethu was built by Lord Ram with the assistance of his army of monkeys. He did this to rescue Sita, his kidnapped wife, from Sri Lanka.



Mysterious Facts

According to some scientific research and studies, the bridge is naturally made with limestone shoals. Radiocarbon dating of samples in this study suggests the domain may have been exposed sometime between 7,000 and 18,000 years ago. It was reportedly passable on foot until the 15th century. Later, when storms deepened the channel: temple records seem to say that Adam's Bridge was entirely above sea level until it broke in a cyclone in 1480.

Some regions are dry, and the sea in the area rarely exceeds 1 meter (3 ft) in depth. It was said that Adam's Bridge after Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka (Adam is supposed to have fallen in this part of the earth), and Nala was the architect (designed) the bridge in Ramayana. In a 2008 court case, a spokesman for the government stated Rama



destroyed the bridge according to the scriptures. Other observers have rejected this claim.

In connection with the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal project, the Madras High Court, in its verdict, stated that the Rama Sethu is a human-made structure. The Archaeological Survey of India and India's government informed the Supreme Court of India in a 2007 affidavit that there was no historical proof of the bridge being built by Rama. The studies of Oceanography suggest that the bridge is 7000 years old. Interestingly, the carbon dating of beaches near Dhanushkodi and Mannar Island sync with the date of Ramayana.

Shipping Canal Project

The archaeological survey undertaken in waters is in anticipation of a massive Sethusamudram Shipping Canal project that aims to reduce the travel times of ships navigating between the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar between India and Sri Lanka. There has been a great deal of opposition to the development. The resistance falls into four main categories:

1. There will be substantial ecological damage;
2. The economic case was not convincing;
3. The project will enhance India's military logistical capabilities;
4. The Canal will destroy Lord Ram's bridge (extreme religious significance to Hindus).

Ram Sethu has been at the center of debate since 2005 when the UPA government proposed the project to build a shipping canal to link the Arabian Sea with the Bay of Bengal. For this, a channel passing through the limestone shoals of Ram Sethu was to be dredged in the Sethusamudram sea, between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. However, the project was opposed by environmental groups and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as they said that the project would damage the Ram Sethu.

ASI has come face-to-face with the powerful religious lobby over the mythical god Lord Ram's existence. The Hindu extremists test India's fragile political secularism as the opposition BJP uses archaeology to exploit religious sentiment for political gain. AIADMK chief Jayalalitha also had demanded from the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that Rama Sethu be declared a na-

tional monument. The DMK chief M Karunanidhi had come down heavily on "communal forces" for using the "myth" of Ram Sethu to stall the Sethusamudram project.

Ram Sethu Formation

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) Goa will study and research to determine the age of the Ramayana period and focus on the process behind the formation of Ram Sethu. It will also help find out whether there are any submerged habitations around Ram Sethu.

ASI has been asked for permission by the NIO on two counts — excavation to ascertain the structure's age and to explore the surrounding area. The consent has been granted. Also, Ram Sethu's age will be verified through the study of fossils and sedimentation to see if it correlates with the Ramayana period, sources in the Ministry of Culture told The Indian Express.

"The historicity and the date of 'Ramayana' remain a debatable subject among historians, archaeologists and scientists. It is proposed to carry out scientific and underwater archaeological studies to understand the nature and formation of the Ram Sethu and its surrounding area," reads the proposal.

As per reports, the research is likely to begin this year because of the upcoming assembly elections in Tamil Nadu. NIO director Sunil Kumar Singh said that the proposed study would be conducted based on archaeological antiquities, radiometric and thermoluminescence (TL) dating for geological time scale, and other supporting environmental data.

The research vessels

The research vessels of NIO, Sindhu Sadhana or Sindhu Sankalp, will be deployed in this underwater study project to collect samples of the sediment from 35 to 40 meters below the water level. Launched in 2014, Sindhu Sadhana is India's first-ever indigenously built research vessel



equipped with several laboratories for data collection, echo sounders, acoustic doppler, profiler, autonomous weather station, and air quality monitors. The ship carries a host of other latest world-class equipment in the field of ocean technology and research and can stay underwater for nearly 45 days. A radiometric technique will be used to ascertain the structure's age, which is reported to consist of coral or pumice stones. Corals contain calcium carbonate that will help the age of the form and, of course, the period of Ramayana.

Geopolitical Concern

After strong opposition from trade unions across the country, Sri Lanka has unilaterally pulled out of a 2019 tripartite agreement with India and Japan for developing the strategic East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port, next to a controversial \$500m Chinese-run container jetty. India and the United States are concerned a Chinese foothold at Hambantota, 240km (150 miles) south of Colombo, could give it a military naval advantage in the Indian Ocean. At present, the project's nature has evolved to a geopolitical and security concern of Chinese influence in India's southern shores. There are possibilities to revive Sethusamudram Project, citing a security and geopolitical interest concerning China.



India Launches 'Neighborly Vaccine Diplomacy'

By Anjana Pasricha

NEW DELHI - In an unusual diplomatic initiative, India has donated millions of doses of the British-developed AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine being produced in the country to neighboring South Asian nations.

The "vaccine diplomacy" aims to raise New Delhi's global profile and push back against China, which has been expanding its influence in South Asia, analysts say.

"It's about image and soft power. India wants to be recognized as a global leader," Sreeram Chaulia, dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs, said.

Maitri# or "Vaccine friendship." The goodwill gesture comes amid growing criticism of "vaccine inequality" or unequal access to vaccines between rich and developing countries and has won praise from India's smaller neighbors.

"Friendly nations help each other. India has helped us today with vaccine; just like they forwarded their helping hand in our Liberation War," said Zahid Maleque, Bangladesh's health minister.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," he said.

As the pandemic puts the spotlight on India as a "vaccine powerhouse," Prime Minister Narendra Modi has



FILE - An employee in personal protective equipment (PPE) removes vials of AstraZeneca's COVISHIELD, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine from a visual inspection machine inside a lab at Serum Institute of India, in Pune, India, Nov. 30, 2020

As the world's largest vaccine producer, India is set to be at the forefront of supplying affordable shots against COVID-19 to low- and middle-income countries. An Indian company, the Serum Institute of India, has joined with AstraZeneca to make the vaccine.

Shipments of the vaccine landed in recent days in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Mauritius and Seychelles, just days after India launched its own nationwide inoculation program.

A plane is seen as Myanmar receives the first batch of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines from India at Yangon Airport in Yangon, Myanmar, Jan. 22, 2021. (Embassy of India in Myanmar/Handout via Reuters)

The vaccine will be sent to Sri Lanka and Afghanistan after it gets approval in those countries.

However, India's rival Pakistan, which has approved the AstraZeneca vaccine, is conspicuously absent from the list of recipients.

"As far as Pakistan [is concerned], I am not aware of any request for India-made vaccines," Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said in response to a query at a regular press briefing.

The low-cost and easily storable AstraZeneca vaccine is in huge demand in developing countries struggling to vaccinate their populations.

New Delhi has given its diplomatic initiative its own hashtag, "Vaccine-

emphasized that it will prioritize South Asian countries in access to vaccine supplies.

"We will continue to give due importance to our Neighborhood First policy while collectively fighting the pandemic," he said in a recent tweet.

China, too, has given its locally developed vaccines to countries such as Indonesia and Turkey, and promised it to many others across Africa, Asia and South America.

However, South Asian countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had asked India for supplies of the AstraZeneca vaccine, developed in Britain.

"India would like to make a point that in this area, unlike in some others where China usually overshadows India in terms of military and economic might, in this field, in pharmaceuticals, in affordable health care, India has actually a comparative edge and advantage over China," Chaulia said.

"That will be a subtle message going around that you can depend on us, that we did not create the problem but we will be part of the solution," he said.

New Delhi has also started commercial shipments of vaccines — the first consignments have landed in Brazil and Morocco and are also set to go to South Africa and Saudi Arabia.

"Keeping in view the domestic requirements of the phased rollout, India will continue to supply vaccines to partner countries in the coming weeks



A plane is seen as Myanmar receives the first batch of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines from India at Yangon Airport in Yangon, Myanmar, Jan. 22, 2021. (Embassy of India in Myanmar/Handout via Reuters)



Students wearing face masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus as they pray upon their arrival at their school, in Karachi, Pakistan, Jan. 18, 2021



Brazil's Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello, other Brazilian officials and India's ambassador attend a ceremony where 2 million doses of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccines from India are being transported to Rio de Janeiro at Sao Paulo Airport, Jan. 22, 2021

and months in a phased manner," Srivastava said.

Modi has said that India will play a frontline role in providing vaccines — both AstraZeneca's and another one developed by an Indian company that also has been approved for emergency use.

"Today India, with not one but two made in India vaccines, is ready to protect humanity," Modi told a virtual convention of nonresident Indians earlier this month.

"Being pharmacy of the world, India has supplied essential medicines to the needy across the globe in the past and is doing it today as well," he said.

In recent months, Indian companies have been ramping up production to meet the unprecedented demand for COVID-19 vaccines. The Serum Insti-

tute of India has already stockpiled 80 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and is churning out 50 million doses a month. Some of those vaccines will also be provided to the World Health Organization-backed COVAX initiative to give vaccines to poor countries.

While inoculation programs are underway in rich countries, developing countries are struggling to secure supplies and begin vaccinating their people. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus recently said that the world is "on the brink of a moral catastrophic failure" for its unequal sharing of COVID-19 vaccinations and warned that a "me-first approach" in distributing vaccines "will only prolong the pandemic."

Via voanews.com

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Tamil Charities and Not-for-Profits: Navigating the Covid Times



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BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

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“THEIR MISTAKE, NOT MY FAILING”

Imagine being one of the most important scientists of the day - yet having people tell you what to accomplish and claiming to be disappointed in you?

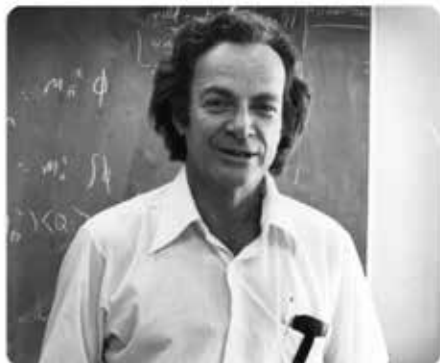
Did Richard Feynman live in Jaffna?

It's a Twitter handle dedicated to sharing his quotes. The theme of others dictating how you should live, and your having to ignore it in order to be happy, crops up repeatedly. He apparently said it repeatedly



Richard Feynman @ProfFeynman

You're under no obligation to please everybody. You have no responsibility to live up to what other people think you ought to accomplish. I have no responsibility to be like they expect me to be. It's their mistake, not my failing!



GODDESS

My students learned a new word yesterday. 'Goddess.'

"What's a Goddess, Miss?"

"I'll give you a clue. We've both Gods and Goddesses in the Hindu pantheon."

"Oh, the Gods and celestial beings like the Devas?"

"Let's put it this way. Shiva is a God and Shakthi is a Goddess."

"Their Arthanatheeswarar form?"

"I didn't say it was the form in which they joined together. As separate beings one is a God and the other is a?"

"Oh, Female God?"

"Correct."

Context: the sentence in their book read "Venus is the Goddess of love."

So I explained the Greco-Roman pantheon to them, then suddenly had a question myself.

"Say, who's the God or Goddess in charge of Love in the Hindu pantheon?"

crickets

Student 1: Er... I suppose its Murugan.

Student 2: No, he's the God of war, not love.

Student 3: Well he did marry twice, so...

Student 2: That doesn't necessarily make him the God of love.

Student 4: I got it. Its Vishnu.

All the rest: Not in his Vishnu form but as Krishna yes. Krishna is our God of love, definitely.

~

Hmm. Well Krishna certainly fell a lot in love himself - but I don't recall the Department of Love coming under his Godly purview.

Fellow Hindus, help me out here.

Do we or do we not have a God for Love?

TEACHING A FAIRY TALE

Teaching Cinderella to adult students be like: "How come that magic shoe didn't turn to dust like everything else at midnight?"

"How could you possibly find the girl by just trying on the shoe?"

Me: Here, if you can watch Tamil movies about the Hero tracking the Heroine via a rupee note...

"Why Miss, what's wrong with that movie? It's a great movie."

WHAT OUR NEIGHBOURS THINK

Far too many of us in Jaffna are living our lives dictated by what our despised neighbour Suppiah might think - rather than what we ourselves think or want for ourselves.

What I can't understand is why we as a community have this ingrained habit of fearing what our neighbours think. Why is that hammered into us from babyhood onwards? "What will the neighbours think?"

We don't respect them. We might not even talk to them. So why let what they think dictate what we do / don't do and how we live our lives?

ACTIVE THEATRE MOVEMENT

One of my favourite theatre troupes in Jaffna - The Active Theatre Movement helmed by director Thevananth Thevanayagam went online recently. That is, they adapted their live plays to zoom. It was thrilling to watch them and I wrote this review as to why such a move is crucially important. Do read - and subscribe to their FB page so you can be kept informed on future zoom productions and watch, free of charge, our live theatre covering social issues in Jaffna .



வண்டியும் தொந்தியும் Drama : Timely Innovation

As a former member of the diaspora Tamils, I could only imagine what our vibrant theatre scene was like based on the tales my father told me. He had been a part of the theatre scene here in the 70s. After returning to Sri Lanka in 2002, I had access to only Colombo theatre over a decade. I used to cover theatre productions as a journalist at the Lionel Wendt, Punchi Theatre etc - they were good productions but once I relocated to Jaffna (in 2013) and saw the quality of productions here, I thought the theatre here far superior to the English productions in Colombo. Sinhala productions might be equal.

Vernacular theatre is far more earthly, rooted and authentic than English theatre on our shores. In that respect, I have long been a fan of the Active The-

atre Movement - and written articles about them for the English National Press too. Many friends in Colombo as well as abroad have expressed interest in wanting to see them just to see if my waxing lyrical was true. I have thus long tried to persuade Thevananth to take his dramas to Colombo as well as abroad.

It's not only to show off our talent - though that is important.

Thevananth's plays showcase the true issues of Northern Tamils in Sri Lanka - he's an excellent artist adept at sussing out our real issues and reflecting it back to us via his plays. Some of them might be bitter pills to swallow but he's good at sugar coating them in liberal douses of humour to make it digestible. And that kind of theatre is important - we need to understand our society better and a good artist will make us reflect upon it. The Active Theatre Movement is

made up of such artistes.

I have long wanted out diaspora who are often desperate to know about the 'true situation' back here in Jaffna to access plays like the ATM's. So when they went virtual recently, I was thrilled.

They went virtual due to covid issues but not only does it mean I can watch from the comfort of my home - it also means Tamils outside Jaffna desperate to know the situation here can access it too. That's very important.

I congratulate the ATM team for this timely innovation. I hope they have a youtube or some other video streaming channel in which their plays are accessible to be shared and re-shared across the globe - they deserve to go viral globally. I wish them all the very best. We have world class talent in Jaffna. Time the world accessed and realized it too

LONG JOURNEY OF WRITING

In researching for my Nallur history article, I reached out to Dr. Ragupathy, a well known archeology scholar from Jaffna.

Dr. Ragupathy was 'Ragupathy uncle' to us in our growing up years as he was our next door neighbour in the Maldives for nearly 10 years. His son R. Iniyam Ilango - at whose birthday party these photos were taken in 1989 was our regular playmate.

Haha - I still remember that toy car.

When I reached out to Ragupathy uncle for news of Nallur, he sent me these photos. Uploading them here for the collective memory .

In those days, I remember uncle as an amiable loving adult, but we treasured aunty more for her extraordinary cooking skills. We were always over at her place, eating. And making Iniyam cry because we sometimes ate his share too.

Now that I am still reaching out to him for help with assignments at the age of 39, I recall here that I reached out to uncle for help with my first essay in Gr.4 at the age of 9. My father was teaching in another island of the Maldives, living away from us on weekdays - so when the teacher told us to write an essay, without ever teaching us how to write an essay - I was left feeling helpless. My mother reached out to Ragupathy uncle next door

and he came over and sat with me late one night, helping me write an essay on the environment. I still recall that essay because the teacher pulled me up for writing words like 'environmental crisis' on it.

"Thulasi, what is the meaning of 'crisis'?" she demanded to know.

I promptly replied, "it means problem." Because Dr. Ragupathy had told me so when using the big word.

She still frowned. "Well, that's too big a word for your age level. Change it to 'problem.'"

I eventually learnt to write my own essays but I suppose that set me off on a long journey of writing and finding the right words which he helped launch. I'm still learning to write, still learning from him. Thank you Ragupathy uncle



hood fairy tales thus dismissed> It does make sense, these are plot devices see? <proceed to give the story in great detail>

"We see now Miss, that director who directed the Jay Jay movie (where the hero tracks the heroine via a bank note) must have written this story. It has the same plot devices." ~

I'm not entirely sure whether that was a concession or not



HEALTH & WELLNESS

5 QUESTIONS WITH... PHILIPPA DAWOOD, WELLNESS COORDINATOR AT SHN

5 Questions With...

Philippa Dawood
Wellness Coordinator



January is often a time of New Year's Resolutions and making goals for the year ahead. After an unprecedented year, many of us will be focusing on our mental, physical and social wellness in 2021. We chatted with Philippa Dawood, a life-long Scarborough resident and the wellness coordinator at SHN to talk to us about setting realistic goals, and why the resiliency of Scarborough is so special to her.

1. The new year is often a time when people reset and make goals related to health and wellness. What advice would you give to people making New Year's resolutions related to wellness?

When we think of wellness, we often think about our physical health. Resolutions made to improve this focus on eating healthier and getting more exercise. In previous years people would go get a gym membership and start exercising there, but now with our gyms closed I would encourage people to ask themselves how they can get more exercise with minimal equipment. One great way to achieve this is to get into virtual fitness and just use your body weight! There are free fitness videos on YouTube and other apps that offer easy and cheap ways to get more exercise at home.

When it comes to nutrition, one good thing that has come out of the lockdown is a lot of people have learned how to cook! Think about making delicious meals with fresh, quality ingredients, and if your goal is to lose weight this is a great place to start.

Overall, when setting goals, it's important to break them down into smaller steps that will get you to where you want to be. Make a S.M.A.R.T. goal that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based so you can set realistic expectations for yourself. You are making a commitment to your physical health and to yourself. That is one thing I love about my role as wellness coordinator – I help to empower people to use the tools and resources at their disposal to be their best self and embody our wellness culture to guide them on their journey.

2. 2020 was an exceptionally difficult time for many as we battled the COVID-19 pandemic, and taking care of our mental health was no exception. How do you recommend people look after their own mental health during a time of social distancing and not seeing family and friends?

The first step is to reflect and be honest with yourself about how you're feeling. Realize

that life has changed for everyone, yourself included. Try to take a good look at your three personal "pillars" – your physical health, mental well-being and your social health.

All three of these pillars are connected, and making a personal checklist of how you're doing with each one can help you pinpoint if you need to focus on one particular area. If your social health is not at 100%, which during COVID-19 has been the case for many as we can't visit our friends and family as often as we used to, try to think of ways you can meet this need through virtual means. Talk to loved ones through Zoom or FaceTime, try participating in activities virtually and most importantly make a schedule and a routine to incorporate those activities.

I would also encourage everyone to limit their news intake, and when you do consume news make sure it's from a reputable source. Positivity and reassuring self-talk can do wonders for your mental health – including giving yourself permission to relax and check in with yourself.

For your mental well-being, it's so important to be honest with yourself and seek help if you need it. There are a number of free resources being offered to Canadians during the pandemic, including AbilitiCBT from Morneau Shepell and resources from the Government of Canada.

3. As our courageous frontline team members continue to care for others during the pandemic, we know it can be difficult to remember to take care of themselves. How can they look after their own health and wellness, and how can those of us in the community support those working on the frontlines?

Our frontline workers have always sacrificed self-care to care for our patients and for each other, even before COVID-19. Work-life balance has been an ongoing battle, and during the pandemic it's important not to be too hard on yourself when it comes to increased screen time or virtual time. Right now it's one of the most important ways we can connect with one another.

And while it may seem like a no-brainer, the number one thing you can do for yourself during these times is get enough sleep! It's important not to feel guilty about going to bed early if you can, and remember to set "do not disturb" on your personal phone and work phone so you can get uninterrupted sleep. Make sure you schedule time for yourself and self-care – one way you can do that

is to schedule blocks of time in your work calendar, even if it's after work hours or on the weekends.

SHN also encourages our team members to speak up and talk about mental health. There is so much stigma surrounding mental health, but if one positive has come out of the pandemic it's that it's allowed people to be more open and honest about their mental health, and given us permission to reach out when we need help.

4. You've been with SHN for almost 3 years now. What do you think makes SHN special?

People often tell me I have the best job – and I truly feel like I do. I'm incredibly passionate about wellness for myself and others, and my job is so robust that I feel like I get to participate in so many different things.

One of my favourite parts is going around to the different units and getting our team members active – whether through stretching or a quick Zumba class! We've had over 32,000 wellness participation moments throughout the last year, which really shows how committed our staff are to their own personal wellness. It really drives home our strategic direction of empowering our people and building a positive culture of wellness here at our hospitals.

5. What is your favourite part about Scarborough and the incredible community we serve?

I've lived in Scarborough almost my entire life, and can say that the diversity and culture is my favourite part. With that of course comes incredible food from all over the world, which I also love to explore!

Scarborough has amazing facilities and resources for physical health, including the Scarborough YMCA and other community centres. I'm a Zumba instructor in the community, and this role has been very rewarding. I get to meet and interact with our incredible community members, and remain active in my physical and social health. I feel very grateful to be able to support our community and team members during these difficult times, and will continue to advocate for patient, staff and community wellness.

Another thing I love about Scarborough is how much love and support they have for all of us here at SHN. Scarborough has had the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the GTA, and as much as our team members and community are burnt out we will bounce back because Scarborough is so resilient. At SHN we have that sense of community, all the way from the top down. Even during tough times, Scarborough and SHN will keep going because we support each other, and we're like a family – with all the ups and downs that come with that!

SHN is the heart and soul of Scarborough, and our staff live and work in this tight community. We have a sense of belonging and incredible resiliency, and I think that's very special.

We are incredibly grateful to have dedicated team members like Philippa looking out for the health and wellness of our team members, patients and our vibrant Scarborough community. To learn more about how you can support SHN and health care in Scarborough, visit SHNFoundation.ca/ways-to-give.

HEALTH & WELLNESS



MEET THE FIRST FRONTLINE STAFF MEMBER TO RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE AT SHN

On December 22, 2020, SHN delivered the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. This was an exciting moment for our community, and a significant step in the continued fight against the virus.

SHN's first vaccine recipients were long-term care and retirement workers in Scarborough, with the very first dose administered to Vernet Dehaney, a personal support worker (PSW) who has worked at Scarborough's Kennedy Lodge long-term care home for 31 years. During the pandemic, Vernet has worked on Kennedy Lodge's Main South unit, improving the lives of those she has cared for. Her vaccination was provided by SHN's Dr. Elan Ambalavanar, an Emergency department physician.

"It's a big relief. It's a breakthrough - it's like the light at the end of the tunnel," Vernet told our SHN team after receiving her



First frontline Staff Member receives COVID-19 Vaccine at SHN

vaccine. "Getting the vaccine gives so much reassurance, knowing that I'm protecting the elderly. Not only did I get it for myself and my family, but for my friends, coworkers and everyone around me."

Since then, our vaccine clinic at the Centenary hospital has been busy working

to ensure all those essential staff working with patients in Scarborough receive their COVID-19 vaccine safely and efficiently.

As of January 15, 2021, all long-term care homes in Toronto were vaccinated, protecting our most vulnerable from the virus.

"It means so much to me," says Grace Rivera, executive director of Kennedy Lodge. "We've been waiting for this for so long and praying this would happen as soon as possible. I would encourage the community, especially our Scarborough community, to get vaccinated when you can."

We are tremendously grateful for the continued care, resilience and courage of our frontline workers. To find out more about COVID-19 vaccinations in Scarborough, visit SHN.ca/covid-19.

Community to show their love for Scarborough this Valentine's Day as SHN Foundation goes online for the Love Song for Loved Ones virtual concert event

Love Songs For Loved Ones

A Virtual Valentine's Day Concert in support of SHN Foundation

Sunday, February 14, 2021 - SHNFoundation.ca/LoveSongs

SCARBOROUGH (January 18, 2021) – On Sunday, February 14, 2021, Scarborough Health Network (SHN) Foundation will invite the community to tune in and give back to the Love Songs for Loved Ones event, a virtual Valentine's Day Concert in support of our local Scarborough hospitals and the courageous frontline health care workers.

"This concert is dedicated to our frontline workers at Scarborough Health Network by a group of amateur musicians who have a real passion for music," said Elizabeth Buller, President and CEO, Scarborough Health Network. "These musicians want to share their voices in honour of the incredible staff and

physicians serving the Scarborough community."

Starting at 7:00 pm EST, the event will be hosted virtually from Toronto's Aga Khan Museum, with more than 25 amateur performers set to hit the stage in support of SHN Foundation. Proceeds from the event will help equip SHN's frontline workers with critical tools and resources to better serve our Scarborough community. It will also support our health network's ongoing fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted the people of Scarborough and has seen SHN tackling among Ontario's highest case volumes.

"It is so important to raise funds from donors and from

our community to support our hospitals," said Alicia Vandermeer, President and CEO of SHN Foundation. "The cost of vital, life-saving equipment is covered by the hospitals themselves, as well as 10% of any new construction, renovations or expansion of spaces."

The virtual event will be available at shnfoundation.ca/lovesongs on Sunday, February 14, 2021, at 7:00 pm.

To learn more about Love Songs for Loved Ones and make a donation in support of the event overall or one of the participating performers, visit www.shnfoundation.ca/LoveSongs. Donations can also be made using our call-in number at **1-844-224-3863**.

SHN 365: Year in Review 2020

SHN 365: Year in Review 2020 is a special report curated to reflect on our experiences this past year. Take a look back at how Scarborough Health Network responded to COVID-19, transformed care with Clinic Services Planning, and advocated for Health Equity. Visit www.shn.ca/shn-365 to see SHN's Year in Review.



Scarborough Health Network Foundation releases the 2020 Donor Report

During an unprecedented year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Scarborough Health Network (SHN) Foundation saw incredible generosity and compassion from our community, supporters and donors. Thank you to everyone who supported us during 2020.

You can view the interactive, digital report by visiting SHNFoundation.ca/2020-Donor-Report or by scanning the QR code below:





Don't quit smoking... without reading this first!

By: Michael Wilson,
Smoking Cessation Coordinator, SHN

National Non-Smoking Week took place from January 17-23 this year. For a smoker, quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do for your health. However, quitting is not a single event, it is a process. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the thought of quitting, focus on practicing smoke-free moments instead.

Before each cigarette you smoke, a specific cue gives you the desire to smoke, often without conscious thought. But when you identify your cues and cravings, you can begin to practice being smoke-free by doing something other than smoking.

Ask yourself:

Is it a physical craving for nicotine?

Manage physical cravings for nicotine with nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), a safe and effective substitution to help you smoke less. You don't even have to be ready to quit to begin using them. Talk to your pharmacist to learn more.

Is smoking part of my routine, like when I wake up in the morning or drive my car? Change your routine. If you always have a cigarette when you wake up in the morning, delay it by five minutes by making your bed first. If you always smoke in your vehicle, try making it a smoke-free space by leaving your cigarettes in the trunk instead of the console.

Is my craving emotional, like when I am feeling stressed out or need a break from work?

It is the relief or break from the stressor that we crave, not the cigarette itself. Cigarettes actually cause more stress on our body, not less. By leaving a stressful situation or taking a break from a frustrating task to have a smoke "break" we are giving ourselves time to calm down. Overcome emotional smoking by going for a walk or texting a friend instead.

You may also ration your cigarettes by removing a few from your pack, only smoking half of a cigarette instead of a full one, or setting short, smoke-free periods each day or several times a week to help reduce your smoking.

Through practice, you will learn more about yourself and what strategies work well for you. Smoking less than you currently do still brings significant health benefits. In fact, your health will improve almost immediately, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation:

- Within 24 hours, your chances of having a heart attack start to go down;
- Within five years, your risk of having a stroke will be nearly that of a non-smoker;
- Within 10 years, your risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half; and
- Within 15 years, your risk of heart disease will be similar to someone who never smoked at all.


The more you practice, the better you will get at being smoke-free. Of course, having a coach is always helpful when learning a new skill. Connect with one of these services to get judgement-free support and encouragement:

- Smokers Helpline: Text "iQuit" to 123456 to receive text message support.
- Telehealth Ontario Smoking Cessation Program: Call 1-866-797-0000 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



- STOP on the Net online research program: (Provides free NRT to study participants): <https://www.nicotinedependenceclinic.com/en/stop/stop-on-the-net>

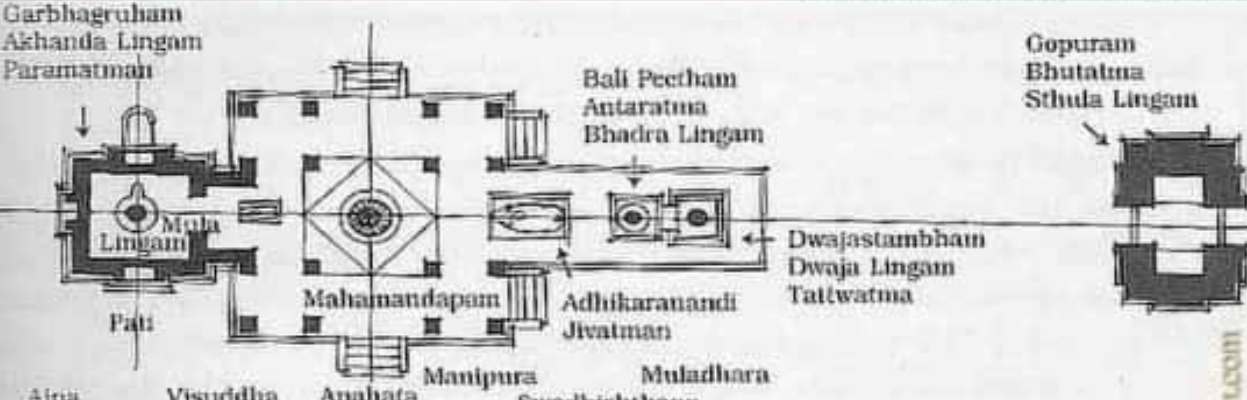
Make 2021 the year you begin to practice smoke-free moments. You've got this!

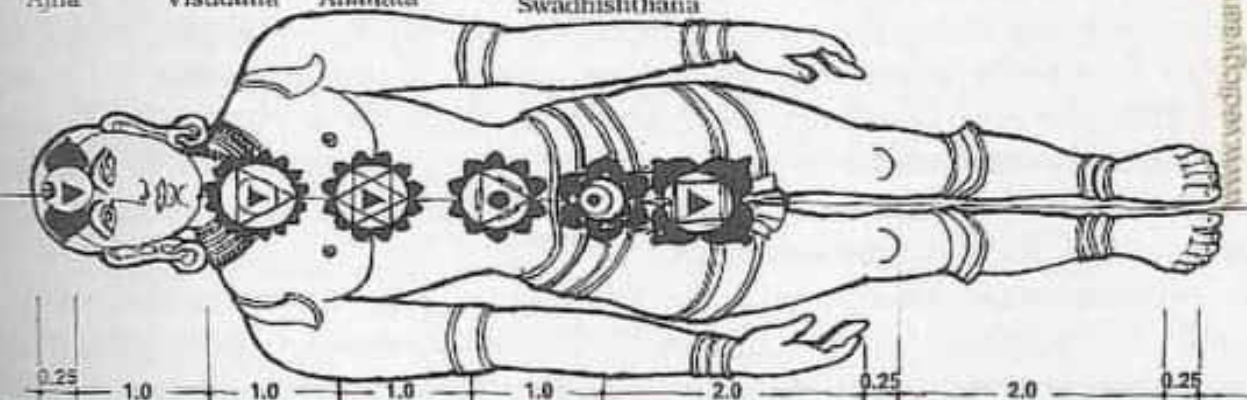


The entire art of building temples is not a mere art, it is a science.

Hinduism and Science

Garbhagruham
Akhandam
Paramatman





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The Structure of the temple from the placement of pillars to the size of the idols everything built with a lot of science. Our body is a temple. Our ancestors believed in this saying. Thus, the temple constructed has a figure of a human body. The pillars placed in the place of arms while the entrance of the temple placed as the feet of the temple. The head is the place where the supreme figure of the idol rests.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Us Vice President Kamala Harris gives America a second family full of firsts

Harris is first Black woman, Indian-American in No. 2 role

By: Raymond Rajabalan



US Vice President Kamala Harris is a first in a number of ways: the first woman, the first Black person and the first Indian-American to serve

in that role.

In her victory speech in early November in Wilmington, Delaware, she recognized that President Joe Biden had made history by picking her as his running mate. "He had the audacity to break one of the most substantial barriers that exists in our country and select a woman as his vice president," Harris said.

Harris Says She Won't Be Last Woman to Serve as Vice President:

Vice President Kamala Harris, 56, the first Black and Indian-American woman to serve in that role, says she won't be the last to do so.

Her husband, Douglas Emhoff, will make history, too. He will be the first man and first Jewish person to serve as a spouse to a president or vice president. Harris is Baptist.

And everyone from political strat-

egists to racial justice activists are waiting to see whether those firsts will be mere symbolic wins or the beginning of a sea change on gender and race relations and the launch of an enduring Democratic coalition.

The symbolism alone is important. Strategists say Black women are the backbone of the Democratic Party. They vote in large numbers, help staff its volunteer efforts and power its wins in key races, but they have not always been well-represented among its candidates or in its policy decisions.

In an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes" last October, Harris vowed that she would bring her diverse perspective to the Biden administration.

"What I will do, and I promise you this — and this is what Joe wants me to do, this was part of our deal — I will always share with him my lived experience as it relates to any issue that we confront," she said. "And I promised Joe that I will give him that perspective and always be honest with him."

Immigrants' Daughter

That experience includes being the daughter of an Indian immigrant and a Jamaican-born father. She was



KAMALA'S PARENTS SHYAMALA AND DONALD HARRIS

raised biracial and interfaith. She is a Christian, but also attended Hindu temples with her mother.

That side of Harris's background could help galvanize Asian-American voters, the fastest-growing racial or

ethnic group in the U.S. and one both Democrats and Republicans have tried to woo.

Based on Nov 07, 2020 article by **Ryan Teague Beckwith** - BNN Bloomberg

"President Biden had the audacity to break one of the most substantial barriers that exists in our country and select a woman as his Vice President," - Harris.



KAMALA AND DOUG EMHOFF



KAMALA HARRIS



KAMALA HARRIS



SPECIAL FEATURE

Words of Peace

Quieting the Noise

You actually get to create your own internal playlist. What do you want to hear?



MC: Something that we've had a couple of questions about, and something that really spoke to me from what you said, was "the noise"—that chatter that is constantly there. And I wondered, "What's the best strategy for coping with it? How do we quieten it down, the noise?"

PremRawat :So, the question is, where does this noise come from? I mean, who is the perpetuator of this noise; who is the generator of this noise, and where is the stage that it ultimately plays out on?

So, the stage where it ultimately plays out on is you! But where does it come from? Well, it is something that started a long, long time ago, right from your parents.

Because, whose voices are there? They are included too, and the friends are included, and the boss, and the friends, and the friends of the friends, and the, everybody who has two-cents-worth of advice, and it just gets recorded,

But then the question becomes, "Why did it get recorded? Who had the record button pushed in?" Right? And we allow this to happen. We don't think we have a choice. Because we don't live our lives by that tactile feel.

I was watching a show where they were showing this person who was

Are you aware of the voice in your own head? Is it coming from you or from other people's voices that you have been hearing your whole life?

challenged with the sight. And as he moved around the room, he had to feel everything—and where it was and how it was—and there were no assumptions.

And we, the ones who have eyes, are most likely to have that chair pulled out from underneath us or even miss the chair. But not this man, because he knows he has to have that feel. Every step that he takes in his life is taken deliberately. Not just, "Uh, let me see what's over there." Do we live our lives like that?

You know, and maybe the noise is a consequence of living a very unconscious life. That if there was a conscious life, then you would say, "Okay! Since I have a tape recorder...." Don't fault the tape recorder, by the way. That's really good that you have a tape recorder. It's the content of the tape recorder that's bad. "So, can I put in nice stuff? If I'm going to have noise, let me have some really lovely noise, something that inspires me, something that gives me courage...." Because we all need courage. That's why courage is

there—hmm—because we need it!

Because in life, the mountains that you have to sometimes cross, that we have created for ourselves, are no ordinary hills. Mind you, they are indeed mountains of extraordinary proportions, and it requires nothing shy of courage to even take on the challenge to do so.

So, you know, this is, in a way, what I do. Because, you look at the Peace Education Program—and when it goes to the prisons, their voice, their tape recorder is going, "I am here, and it's the fault of that person, and that person, and that person, and that person."

And they go through the Peace Education Program, and they start to realize, "Hey, look at yourself." And when they do, then they realize that they are standing at a threshold where they can change.

And it is no mistake or an accident that people who go through the Peace Education Program—at least, the inmates who go through the Peace Education Program—have the lowest rate of return back into the prisons.

So, we're not inmates, are we? I mean, we're not in a prison system, are we? The prison system you are currently in.... The other prison system, they'll get out after two years, three years, four years, five years. The prison system you are in, you don't get to get out till you die—sorry. Huh! You're in for life.

Folks, it's really time to start creating your heaven, because there are no options here. The wall is there—and there are no options! And getting rid of that noise and putting the this noise and keeps: "Ah, push play again, please." nice noise on is up to you. It truly is—because you're the one who is doing it: who's buying into And, you know, and has it on "repeat," so it just keeps repeating and repeating and repeating and repeating.

Life has the possibility of creating your own playlist—your playlist that you like. Do you want to accept that challenge? You know, the issue isn't just the noise. We can replace it with something beautiful, something wonderful, something you like. Not what I like—you like! Because I want to create my playlist of something I like. You create your playlist, something you like.

PremRawat

www.timelesstoday.com

SPECIAL FEATURE



Tholkaapiyam oldest Tamil book

● An introduction

By: Kumar Punithavel

Though Tholkaapiyam is accepted as the oldest available written literature in Tamil, is referred to as a book of grammar, and is believed to be about 3000 years old. It differs from other grammar books in that, it while providing the grammar for Tamil it also provides the guide and grammar for life and living, of Tamil populous. With the repeated foreign invasions, many of the Tamil heritage have been lost by merging different ethos. Today Tholkaapiyam survives only as a document to refer to, and know how the Tamilian race lived a very cultured way of life, and their wisdom, about three thousand years ago.

In the last millennia many foreigners had subjugated the Tamils. As recently as in the last two centuries it was the Dutch, Portuguese and the British who ruled over them. Previous that too, there had been many invasions from the north of India. It is frequently the more barbaric race that wins over the civilized race for want of valour.

The epic book of grammar Tholkaapiyam, of Tamil language and Tamilian ways of life, has three subdivisions called athikaram. In the ancient times writing was a very difficult task. In order to economize long writing the essentials are written in the form of aphorisms called *noot-paa* literally meaning book verse. The book has a total of 1,612 aphorism or *nootpaas*. It has been sub divided into three subdivisions, and the first subdivision is called *Eluthu-athikaram* in which letters and its phonetics are dealt with. It also shows how they copulate with one another forming combined sounds etc. It is interesting to note that the length of time for a particular syllable is said to be a *mathirai*. It further goes to the extent of defining the time period for a *mathirai* as the time taken to wink the eye or snap the fingers. This *Eluthu-athikaram* is subdivided into nine parts.

The second subdivision or athikaram is titled Chol-athikaram meaning subdivision of words where extensive grammar is delt with like noun, verb, adjective adverb together with other necessary conditions in writing etc. It is interesting to note that the author has identified and categorized four different group of words to be used in poetry. They are *Iyatchol* or natural words (meaning the traditional original words), *Thirichol* distorted words, *Vadachol* meaning northern words (words that got infiltrated from north, from languages like Sanskrit) and *Thisaichol* meaning the words that came into Tamil from around the world. In those times Tamils did sea trades around the world. Interestingly Tamil too has given many words to the lexicon of other languages too. British who ruled the Tamil nation took away words like anicut and catamaran etc. from Tamil language for their usage. Understandably the author had viewed the world like the poet *Kaniyan poonkundranar* of that time, who had composed a famous poem in the anthology *Purananooru* of Sangam literature as யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர் meaning 'world is my hamlet and humanity my kin', expecting the languages to keep changing, accepting knowledge from everywhere.

The third subdivision is very special for Tamil language and is titled *Porul-athikaram*. The word '*porul*' literally means subject matter, and for a language the subject matter is the people who use that language. In this case the Tamil race of that time. The author has devoted a complete subdivision for the grammar of the Tamil people of that



மதுரையில் கோர்ட் அருகே உள்ள திருவுருவம்

time. To this day no other language grammar had thought of giving the prosody or the constitution for its people way of living. It is here the book covers the two genres of Sangam literature, the *aham* and *puram*. *Aham* deals with the individuals' personal life like love, erotic and other emotional matters. And *Puram* deals with individual's interaction with exterior world like society, virtue, valour war etc.

Interestingly *aham* has been further divided into two distinct parts as *kalaviyal* dealing with premarital love and relationships, and *Katpiyal* on post marital relationships. People were identified by the topography and terrain they lived in. There were four distinct landscapes mentioned. They were *Kurunji*- the mountainous area, *Neithal*- sea and seashore, *Marutham*- agricultural field lands, *Mullai*- forest lands. And the people followed professions suitable to their surroundings they lived in, like agriculture, fishing, hunting, cattle rearing etc. During those times they had maintained their identity with wearing garlands made from their terrain to distinct one from the other. Each had their own God/ Deity to protect them. Apart from these specialized deities of the terrain, there were other deities too. *Kotravai* the feminine deity was considered as deity to be prayed, for blessings, before going for a war. Understandably her name is derived from the Tamil word *kottram* which means victory, success or bravery.

It must be mentioned here, in the days gone by, Thiruvalluvar took a respectable place in Tamil culture where it was pointed out by great Tamil poet and law giver in his epic book *Thirukkural* mentioned in couplet 76 mentions;

The unwise deem love virtue only can sustain,
It also helps the man who evil would restrain.

It is mentioned in Tholkaapiyam the men who lost their lives in the defence of their homeland were honoured and remembered by erecting a granite monument called '*Nadu Kal*', which literarily means planted granite stone. But, in spite of many diverse deities and worshiping customs they lived a life of peace and harmony, until the foreign invasion which toppled the peaceful way of life. Another interesting feature is they had no hierarchal order among themselves as mentioned in sastras of other parts of India.

During those times a Tamil girl could choose her life partner as per her wish, without any restriction. The partner was decided on her hearts desire or a brave lad was selected from the celebrations of *Jallikattu*, where a young lad subdues ferocious bull bare handed while the whole village watches him. Unlike bull fights it the west, the life of the bull is spared. In those times a person's wealth was judged by the number of livestock he had in his herd. The word *maadu* in Tamil has two connotations. One is cow and other is wealth.

Leaving the exact date, Tholkaapiyam was authored aside, all learned would agree that Tholkaapiyam is a great book of grammar of Tamil language and also spelling out the ethos to live by, for the Tamil people. It has to be cherished and preserved for the benefit of the future generations.



SPECIAL FEATURE

Op-Ed

Try Product Before You Buy: The Next Big Thing in Ecommerce



MyVoiceStore.ca brings new concept to your home

Have you ever looked at a product and wanted to try it but did not because the retail size was too large to try or worried that you will waste that product if you did not like it!

The goal of the online store MyVoice Team is to allow consumers to try every product to ensure that you like it, you are happy with the product and it fulfills your need before committing to purchase that product: especially an eco-friendly product?

Sometimes, these are major decisions financially or health-wise. Here are some examples:

Laundry detergent – there are Eco-Friendly laundry detergent strips. The manufactures claim that

the product works as much as a traditional laundry detergent. However, the smallest amount of that product that you can purchase is with 32 loads of laundry detergent at a regular price of \$16.59. This is a concern because you are an eco-friendly person/family and willing to pay a bit more and willing to switch your loyal laundry to a new eco-friendly brand, but you are not sure if this works for you. What if you did not like the product, you not only wasted hard-earned cash, but you are also wasting a good product that can be used by someone else. Now, you can purchase 4 loads for \$1.00 at MyVoiceStore.ca to try and if you like the product,

you can revisit the site to purchase a large retail size product.

*Spices – There are several varieties of spices in the market. Some call for a small portion of a spice and you do not want to purchase a large amount while you are trying a recipe. At MyVoiceStore.ca, you can purchase a trial size of various spices and more.

We care about our planet and want to leave it a better place for future generations. We work with eco-friendly manufacturers to reduce waste one product at a time. MyVoice® is a registered trademark of Ambu Communications Inc.

Thai Pongal celebrations at Saiva Mangayar Vidyalayam in Colombo

“Colombo’s leading Hindu School for girls Saiva Mangayar Vidyalayam recently celebrated the Thai Pongal Festival in the school premises observing health measures due to the current COVID - Pandemic. The Manager of the School Ms. Sivanandini Duraiswamy welcomed the guests present.”

Seen here are pictures taken at the event.

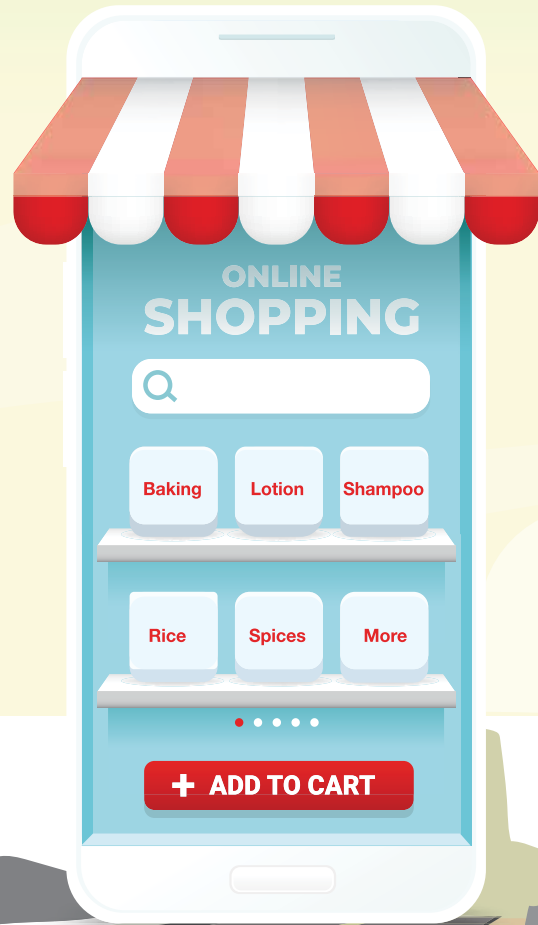


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Srikrishnan Subramaniam Pushed Us to Do and Be Better

by Gary Anandasangaree

Srikrishnan Subramaniam, or Sri Anna as he was affectionately known, has played a pivotal role over the past thirty plus years in Canada. He challenged us to be better, to do better, and usually gave his half smiling grunt when he agreed with you. His passing this week leaves a hole in the heart of many in Toronto's Tamil-Canadian community, and as someone who looked up to Sri Anna for the past 25 years, I wanted to share with you my reflections on one of the kindest souls I have had the fortune of meeting.

Sri Anna was very proud of his Malaysian, Vaddukodai, and Tamil roots. Since migrating to Canada, arriving in Toronto in 1989 with the love of his life, Yogarani, and their boys, Sanjeevan and Sathian, he was most proud of being a Canadian. For Sri Anna, Canadian Values and Freedoms were the core of who he was. Like many of his generation, he came to Canada with an Engineering Degree, and the drive to do something good in Canada. In 1992, along with his wife, he started Selvasegara Jewelers, a modest, but highly successful jewelry shop on the bustling Kennedy and Eglinton corridor, which in the 1990's was the hub of the Tamil community. Selvasegara offered a unique blend of modern Jewelry to a growing Tamil population, who valued quality and honesty. As part of his service to his customers, he would pierce the ears of newborn children and bless them with a lifetime of happiness. Yogarani ran the day-to-day business and was his rock from the beginning. Sri Anna had the luxury to do the things he cared about.

Sri Anna was a founding member of the Canada-Ceylon Tamil Chamber of Commerce in 1991. While he was never President, the Chamber was his second home. He toiled for years, well after his retirement to

ensure the Chamber served the needs of the business community. He mentored many young business people and supported and organized them to have a better work life balance. You may recall that he organized a group of retailers to close on Tuesdays. Many followed him, and that became the norm for his business. He would close for two weeks in July because he wanted the family to have quality time together. He became the voice for many retailers who had little leverage and support over customers who demanded 7 days a week service from often family run businesses. He fought for these values and principles at the Chamber. When Sri Anna took the microphone, he never held back his opinion. If there was something good, he would push to strive to do even better. He believed that the Chamber should be the center of the Tamil business community in Canada and must have an impact on new entrepreneurs who came after. He believed in data collection, and proper administration and above all a vision that would ensure that the Chamber supports the community. He invested a great deal of own finances and time to ensuring this over his life.

He supported many businesses as they started off, either as a partner or shareholder. Some of these enterprises are thriving today and behind the scenes Sri Anna was their anchor and source of strength. His generosity was renowned. I remember asking him for money for the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre when it was in its infancy. It was a difficult meeting. His questions were captivating and challenging with the goal of making us think. When it came to support the organization, he didn't blink and cut a cheque. He repeated this throughout his time in business and many charitable endeavors.

His deep affection for the betterment of the Tamil community in

Canada is coupled with his unwavering support for justice, and peace for Tamils in Sri Lanka. He would quietly but consistently be a source of strength for those working on aid programs and advocacy so that Tamils could live on the island in peace and dignity.

I have many fond memories of Sri Anna, but the one that I cherish is the advice he gave me, and one that I have repeated to anyone who is charging their own course in business. He came to my law office opening and sat with me after most people left. He looked and asked me if I take vacations. Truth be told, at the time, I rarely took time off, let alone vacations. He said, I have no doubt that you will succeed in law, but make sure you take two weeks off a year and go on vacations with your family. This is something that I have always done because he knew the sacrifice people in business make at the cost of family - and upon reflection - these are some of my fondest memories in my life. I suspect he told me this because, this was also the most important part of his life, and with Yogarani passing on so early in her life, it is something that he cherished always.

It is these personal connections with someone who I consider a mentor that I will cherish the most. I must admit that I am guilty of having a drink or two with him, even though he ought not to have. Despite his retirement, he came to our house to pierce my eldest daughters' ears. He would captivate us in conversations. I remember a time that I went to his condo with my friend Arnold Chan when he was running for the nomination. What was supposed to be a ten-minute meeting became an hour long discussion because they both became immersed in deep engaging conversation. After my own election, Sri Anna would often call me just to tell me how and what our government is doing wrong. I would then ask why he



Srikrishnan Subramaniam
April 14, 1945 – Feb 6, 2021

didn't call to tell me the good things our government is doing. He would say, everyone will tell you what's good. With that, there are so many more memories of him that I cherish and value.

His family was his world. He loved both of his daughters-in-law, Roveena and Raju, almost as much as he did his two sons. Sanjeevan and Sathian are both incredible young men (not so young anymore) who have built beautiful lives of their own. He was always proud of them both, and unlike most fathers, he wouldn't gloat, but he was always their rock. And in return, they took care of Sri Anna and ensured that his last years were filled with love which included meeting his twin grand-daughters Isa and Sia (Sathian & Raju). My deepest condolences to you all, and I know over time, I see Sri Anna through both of you every time I see you.

Sri Anna spoke truth to power and was never dogged by public opinion. Many people misunderstood this and were on the defensive. He ultimately pushed us to do and be better. Thank you, Sri Anna, for everything. We truly lost a gem in our community this week.

**Gary Anandasangaree is
Member of Parliament, Scarborough-Rouge Park, Canada**

Passing of Mr. Srikrishnan gives me a deep personal loss

An outstanding champion of betterment of others, Mr. Srikrishnan is a community builder. He was very active in many associations and volunteer organizations without seeking any position or title. As such many organizations in the community are the beneficiary of his long, dedicated service since he was committed to helping people. He was a central figure in growing the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce (CTCC) from its founding. It was through CTCC my ties with Srikrishnan Anna blossomed into family friendship over these decades.

Mr. Srikrishnan's mere presence helped CTCC navigate a time when retailing and entrepreneurialism was unseen as a group needing an organized setup in the community. His commitment was formidable in CTCC emerging as a pioneering organization that displayed the Tamil Canadian community name along with economic skill in the forefront.

I express our deep appreciation and condolences to his friends and family, and thank Mr. Srikrishnan for the legacy he leaves behind for the betterment of future generations.

~ Logan Velumailum



Mr. Srikrishnan

Srikrishnan Subramaniam A Champion of Tamil Business Entrepreneurship in Canada and Founder Member of CTCC passes away gracefully

By Siva Sivapragasam

Mr. Srikrishnan, one of the visionaries of the Canadian Tamil Business community who realized the importance of a Business Chamber for the immigrant Tamil community, and a founder member of the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce (CTCC) passed away peacefully and gracefully recently after a period of illness.

Mr. Srikrishnan's tireless efforts and motivation for a Business Chamber for the Tamil business community was a dream he cherished and became a reality when the CTCC was formed in 1991. Over the years, the CTCC has become a vibrant body representing the Tamil Business community and helped in showcasing the entrepreneurship talents of the Canadian Tamils.

Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Srikrishnan, and other visionaries of the Tamil community, CTCC is today recognized with repute. Mr. Srikrishnan, as a founder member of the Chamber he nurtured, and nourished the Chamber through his efforts and participation in Chamber activities. He was one of those who always advocated the hiring of a full-time Manager for the Chamber and the purchase of an office building for the Chamber.

In his personal capacity Mr. Srikrishnan was a successful businessman with a Midas touch in his business pursuits and community service. In his professional capacity, Mr. Srikrishnan qualified as an Electrical Engineer in UK and

worked for Singapore Telecom before he arrived in Canada to establish Selvasegara Jewellers, a well-known Jewellery store among the community. Mr. Srikrishnan always remained a fervent supporter of the business activities of the Tamil community. I realized this in my dealings with him for the continued support he gave every year for the Tamil Business & Information Directory titled "Thamilar Mathiyil".

Mr. Srikrishnan was an outspoken personality who never minced his thoughts or words when he speaks. A charming conversationalist at gatherings who kept guests smiling with his wit and humour. He was a friend of all and an enemy to none. His maturity and experience were displayed and demonstrated many a time during activities of the Chamber. No doubt the Chamber will feel the void created by his absence in the future and more so the Canadian Tamil Business community.

In accordance with his wishes, his body was donated to the Medical Faculty of the University of Toronto. His wife Yogarani pre-deceased him, and he leaves behind two sons Sanjeevan and Sathian; daughters-in law Roveena and Raju; grandchildren Isa and Sia; his brothers Balakrishnan, Anandakrishnan & Vickneswaran; his sisters Maheswary, Saraswathy & Rukmani and brother-in law T. Sivayogapathy.

An epitaph for Late Srikrishnan would be in the words of the poet - "His life was gentle and the elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world - This was a man"

Tribute

It is with sadness we offer our sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Srikrishnan. We reminisce with fondness our past memories of Srikrishnan uncle. Mr. Srikrishnan was a mentor and ally for our father at the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce (CTCC), and it was here where we came to know of the charismatic, bold, and principled man that was Mr. Srikrishnan.

During our youth we would volunteer at the CTCC annual events, where we met many positive influences, one such member was an out-spoken advocate for those who needed to be heard, but may not have had the ability to do so. If an opinion had merit in his eyes, he would make sure it was heard. This was Srikrishnan uncle. Even still, Mr. Srikrishnan would spend time with the youth volunteers, and encourage us with his exuberance. It's no doubt to us that both his sons, who also were youth volunteers, exude confidence and positivity, which Mr. Srikrishnan portrayed and instilled in all those he touched.

Mr. Srikrishnan was a loving father and husband, a successful and honest businessman, a talented and knowledgeable jeweller, a Canadian Tamil Business advocate, a trusted and true friend of our father, and an uncle who left indelible marks on our childhood.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, and we know his legacy will live on with his children and his many contributions to society.

With sympathy,

Krishni Narine and Dr. Shiyam Loganathan

More condolence messages contd. on Page 27...



Srikrishnan, an avid nature lover always had gardens and flowers around the house

Srikrishnan Subramaniam

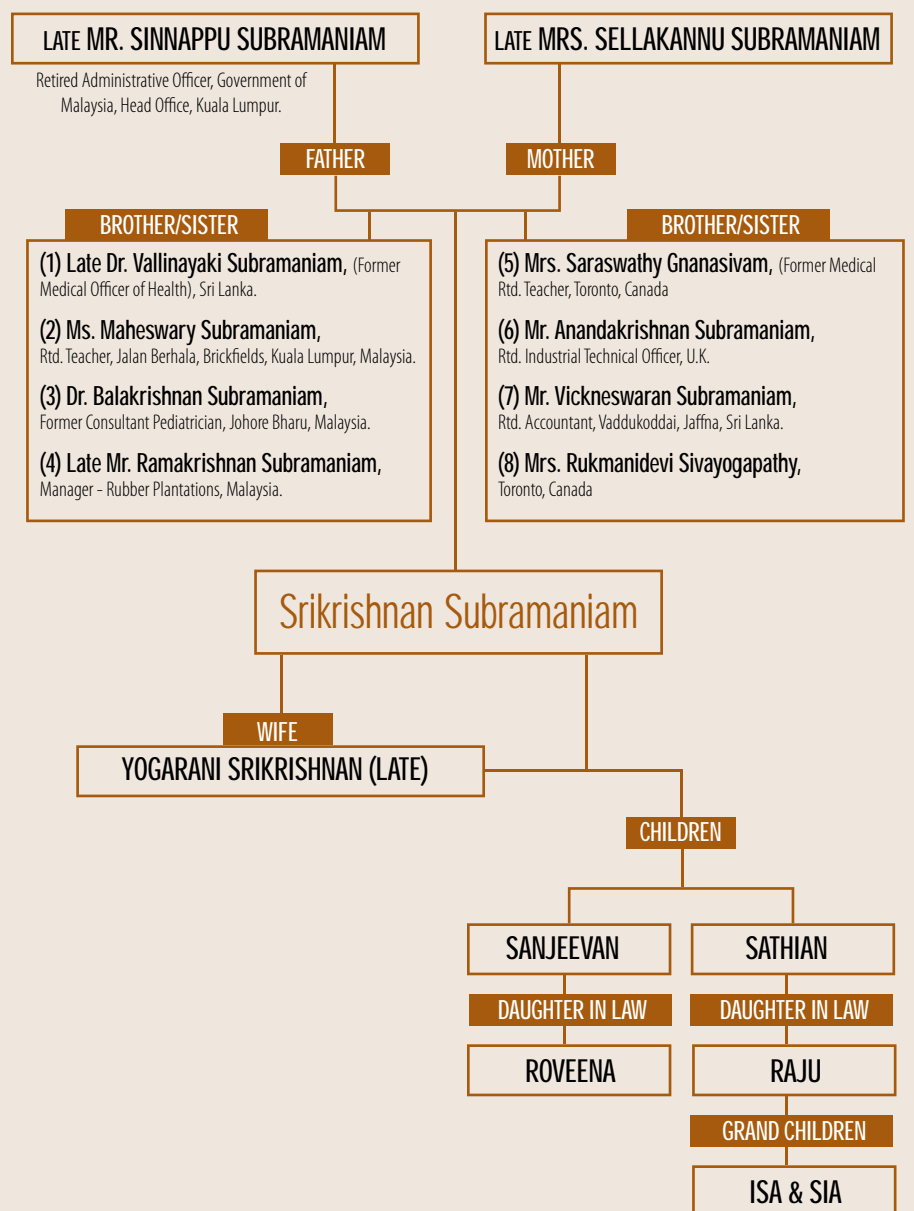
Srikrishnan was born in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Later, he proceeded to Vaddukodai, as a small boy along with his parents, brothers & sisters. He started his Primary schooling at Jaffna College, Vaddukodai.

After graduating in Sri Lanka, Sri proceeded to the U.K. for his Higher Studies & qualified as an Electrical Engineer.

From the U.K. he proceeded to Singapore & joined Singapore Telecom as an Engineer and then later due to his High Performance, he was promoted as Manager, Switching & Planning of Singapore Telecom.

Subsequently, he migrated to Canada in 1989, with his family.

Details of his family:



CTCC Committee in early years, 1996/97; Mr. Srikrishnan, Standing 4th L to R.



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COMMUNITY WATCH

Srikrishnan Subramaniam: Messages of Condolence Contd. from page 25

"A true gentle giant, his charismatic and thoughtful actions span many spheres and walks in communities he touched! May his soul Rest In Peace and deepest condolences to the family!"

That was my message of condolence on the social media post notifying the passing of Mr. Srikrishnan.

It is deeply saddening to recall those times I interacted with him very frequently in the nineties decade when I was also a Torontonians; and now he has departed leaving behind just those times to cherish.

My relationship with him profoundly was in my dealings as a contributor of mostly Canadian news on publications edited by DBS Jeyaraj.

Srikrishnan Subramaniam the name pictures to many his moustache, deep voice and a passionate desire to serve, contribute and uplift others.

The Tamil Canadian life of the nineties crisscrossed numerous crises and challenges but Mr Srikrishnan was at every cornerstone in his own unique ways. His way is delivering on all his beliefs, therefore he was there to contribute in all ways possible. He carried with him all the virtues of life has to offer, from his birthplace Vaddukodai, Jaffna College and sojourns in England and life in Singapore.

He would always encourage me to do more of my writings and emphasize on the necessity to reach out to many people in the wider spectrum of our new home country in the True North Canada. He would treat me in utmost geniality and respect when we shopped in his establishments.

He is a well known philanthropist to the many organizations of that time.

Now that it feels like a generation has passed and this isn't the tumultuous nineties we confront as Tamil Canadians. But shoes like Mr. Sri Krishnan's are hard to fill at any time in history!

Thiru Thirukumar

"One of my close associates in different activities. A great gentleman and it is a big loss for the Tamil community; he was instrumental in forming the first Tamil Chamber of Commerce. May his soul rest in peace. My sincere sympathies are with Sanjeevan and their family."

Sinnadurai Senthivel

"I would like to express profound grief and deep sorrow for the loss of our bold, straightforward, fearless, thoughtful and lovely gentleman, Srikrishnan. I knew him for several years while being a board member in CTCC and after. He had the courage to say, what many of US may think, but dare not utter. My thoughts are with his family and friends."

- Yaso Sinnadurai, Barrister & Solicitor, Toronto

"Mr. Srikrishnan has been an asset to the community in many ways and was deeply committed to an evolving structured society. He was sincere, honest and direct in his commitments. Mr. Srikrishnan will be sorely missed not only by his family but by his community of friends as well. A life well lived. May he rest in absolute peace."

- Arul. S. Aruliah, Founding Chair, Yaarl Co-operative Homes, Mississauga.

"Late Srikrishnan Subramaniam who was one of the founder members of the Chamber was a tower of strength to the CTCC and always brought valuable advice to the Chamber through his wide knowledge and experience in the field of business activity. His passing away is a great and immeasurable loss not only to the Chamber but also to the Canadian Tamil business community. He was always outspoken and a firm advocate of the need for an office building for the Chamber and I feel happy and proud that his dream has become a reality since the Chamber has purchased a building of its own recently. May his soul rest in eternal peace."

Santha Panchalingam, President Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce (CTCC)

"Srikrishnan and I met in 1995 at the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce. Very quickly I realized that he was a unique person. Sri was in a business, he was not trained for. His educational and career credentials were in telecommunication engineering. But, he soaked himself into small business in Canada and continued to fight for strengthening and supporting many business ventures in our community. The Tamils' Chamber of Commerce was a good fit for him in this advocacy."

At times, Sri and I have had difference of opinions in policies and issues at the Chamber of Commerce; but at the end of the day, we remained respectful to each other's views.

We just lost a very simple soul, with strong convictions towards betterment of our business community, in particular and the community, at large."

K. Gnanachandran, Co-Owner, Majestic Wealth, Past president, CTCC

"Dear Ratna,

Srikrishnan was my classmate and I am saddened to hear that he is no longer with us.

I remember the days when we went to his place during lunch time to listen to cricket commentary. They had a very powerful radio with an antenna to match that could get radio Australia without any trouble.

My heartfelt condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace.

Kind regards"

Sriragavan



CTCC Committee in early years, 1997/98; Mr. Srikrishnan, Standing 5th L to R.

"Mr. Srikrishnan was instrumental with other key members of the Chamber for many of our small businesses' success, including mine. He always made sure that we came up with ideas to help the business community. His focus was to help Tamil Community here in Canada and back home and it to become a very successful community. He worked diligently for the Tamil causes. Also he suggested my name to the selection committee for the presidency of the Chamber and challenged me with every step of the way and every event we organized, at the end he made sure that we were all successful along with the community businesses. He'll be missed and remembered as long as the Chamber exists."

Kula Sellathurai, Entrepreneur, Author, Past President, CTCC

"A respectful leader, mentor and a guide to many business people in the community. A straightforward talker but a kind hearted personality.

Respectfully call him Uncle and had an opportunity to host him at a social reunion event a few years back. He will be missed by many.

My respects and regards."

Gnane Buwan Gnanendran

"Ratna,

I feel your emotions. Sri was a good friend.

Sad to hear about him passing away. His brother Wigneswaran was my classmate from 1957- 1964. Knew all the members of the family as well. They are also relatives of my wife Dhanarajini.

In recent times, I met him at your son's wedding and also in Toronto several times with my other friends and Sri's brother in law Pathy.

Heartfelt condolences to all his family.

His father Manium Overseer owned all the properties in College Lane starting from the "Pin café" (Perambalam's book shop) to all the way to Chelliah Hostel).

Many of us have lived in properties owned by his family while at JC. Their family contributed a lot to enhance the life around Jaffna College.

May his soul Rest in Peace."

Mithie Tharson



(Year-2012 in Toronto) With Kanagaratnam Master (85 years of age) in Crimson & Gold Colour Shirt.



Participating at Charity Events



SPECIAL FEATURE

The uses of Self-control

*Adakkam amarul
uikkum adangamai,
Aar irul uiythu vidum*



By: *J.A. Rajah*

Effective self-control will lift a man to be among the Gods; Inability to control will immerse a person into utter darkness. Jesus put it rather convincingly when he asserted that 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth'. It is good to treasure the virtue of self-control as there is no greater wealth for the soul. If one exercises self control, with knowledge and intent he will be considered a wise man. The glory of a consistently virtuous man who exercises self control, is greater than that of the mighty

mountains. Jesus in his sermon of the mount asserts that 'the meek shall inherit the earth'. Meekness is an asset and for the wealth, it is an added possession. Like a tortoise, if one is able to control the five senses, it will give everlasting strength through all his seven births. Whatever else is left unguarded, one should control his tongue, for a wagging tongue could give immense trouble. The Bible reinforces the same idea when it states: 'The wicked are snared by the transgression

of their lips'. Just the utterance of a hard word will pollute the intended good of one's words. The injury resulting from a burn heals, but the ugly marks caused by an offending or abusive word will not easily heal. A man who controls his self/ego and anger will be helped by virtue. Erasmus, a reputed philosopher quipped, 'The spirit of God, delighteth to dwell in the hearts of the humble'. Saanron, the ideal man portrayed in Purannooru describes such a person as 'Aynthavintu adangiya korlhaich saanror'.

*"Ellarkum nanram panithal avarullum,
Chelvarkkum chelvam thahaithu"*

(Kural: 121-130)



Valluvar's Views





Zooming for Intermingling in the Era of the Pandemic

By: J.A. Rajah

A. Zooming to stay connected:

Zooming has now become the most common device to stay connected. Nowadays zooming takes different forms to fulfill the diverse needs of the people. Zooming for news, information, computer graphics, photography, films, image processing, group conferencing and online meetings have now become necessary for people to stay connected. Google Meet helps with day-to-day connection and communication with each other for free. It is designed for collaboration and trusted by millions. Online meetings are free. www.gopler.com helps free on-line meetings. It provides for video meetings, group messaging, file sharing, and also serves as a virtual platform for meetings. One could attend meetings from anywhere in the world (www.gotomeeting.com)

Zoom is a cloud-based conferencing tool that lets you host visual one to one or team meetings easily. With powerful audio, video, and collaboration feature its remote communication tools connect team members. Zoom's key features include HD, video chat, and conferencing. The best video conferencing apps can do more than a virtual face-to-face meeting. They let you show your faces to everyone else. It seamlessly passes control of the meeting to another person and records the call as a video. Web-conferencing service Zoom offers these features and also provides advanced menus. The tricks and tips below show us how to use the app to work, learn, and communicate with others virtually.

B. The Modalities of Zooming:

Zapier is an automatic platform that lets you connect your favorite apps to save time and focus on work that matters most. The automatics are called Zaps and there are several pre-made zaps called zeal templates. To get started with a zap template one needs to click on it and be guided through customizing it- it takes only a couple of minutes. To set up a connection between Zoom and Zapier, one needs an e-paid zoom account. Free account holders have access to the zoom App. What's App, Viborg, and



Zoom are applications that have now become popular for enabling people to keep connected for their essential meetings.

C. Zooming for Religious Activities:

Recently Zooming has helped people to have their religious observances as they are not allowed by the Federal Government as well as the Provincial government not to get together at churches for their normal worship sessions. Pastors are now organizing zoom sessions for Sunday services, anniversaries, Bible studies, and prayer meetings. The threat of Covid-19 is driving people to seek the help of the Divine to get rid of their fears and desperations. Some are having depressions and mental problems having been forced to stay indoors without any human contact. Single people are adversely affected and hence the need for prayer and meditation has now become more necessary than ever before. Pastors have to work more than ever before organizing meetings to boost up the minds of their church members. People also keep in touch with their relatives spread throughout the world through zooming.

D. Zooming and Industries:

The Coronavirus has caused a service shift in industries.

We have to use on-line tools and our own innovative skills to stay connected and recover our businesses. Because so many people have smartphones, computers, and tablets, the infrastructure is already there in many ways. Reaching out to people, wherever they have never been easier. Physically connecting with someone actually takes a lot of time and energy. Slack and Zoom call make it much easier. The time to save and how much you can get done in a day may surprise you. Seven industries already zombifying. Many yoga studios gyms and Hit classes are affecting on-line classes-via video conferencing. Food establishments are offering deals and speedy pick-up orders via Hi swift, yelper, and Google Call. Highly innovative chefs are already offering classes and at-home menus. It is not the same but it is something. On-line broadcasts and digital connections have now become frequent. Amazon announced a 10-day event in which it will stream movies earlier canceled due to the virus. Everyone can now find the community that matters to them on-line and engage with a group of people via Facebook, Git Hub, Hackster, Dribbble, Reddit, and many other applications. Developing a stronger E-learning connection and keeping children engaged in a virtual hangout learning will become essential so that parents can work and maintain home stability. Now is the time for education to develop on-line course work or even

physical or artistic classes to keep kids engaged when parents are working. New shopping techniques have been in vogue. Video-chats enables one to engage in online shopping and had made it personalized and fun. Now it is easier to pick up the latest gym equipment, kitchen appliances, lip-stick, running shoes, etc. on-line.

Now manufacturing industries and construction are hard hit. However, there is an opportunity to service group collaboration and productivity by using. Samples and vendor quotes can also be made through zooming. Being online provides an opportunity with an opportunity to scale that a lot of industries have not capitalized on nor understood. One can showcase the work through web-castle, recordings, podcasts, blogs, and more. Now is the time to adapt to changes. We can mingle through working, conferencing, and depend on media tools like never before. We can usher in a new era of effective workplace products for the future. A virtual connection will become the life-blood of companies and the faster an enterprise adjusts to these innovations, the more opportunity there is to move forward and enjoy the modalities that are here to stay.

E. Assessment of the Impact of Zooming:

In these years of the Pandemic, there is a great need for people to come together to pursue their matters of urgent need. The virtual connections become a viable solution. It is not an adequate substitute for real meetings. One can sense the absence of real fellowship in zoom-based church services. There is nothing equal to enjoying fellowship like gathering together, singing, and praising God. It is when others join together in singing and praising God that you get the enthusiasm for worship. In places like Sri Lanka, they still continue to have services at church. In some cases, they combine real services with virtual. Even in other human activities, there is nothing equal to persons getting together face to face. However, zooming brought into practice through technological devices has made it possible for people to get together virtually and reach their objectives.



Can Money Buy Happiness?

By: Shakthyni Sivanesan



We have all heard of the question, “Can money buy happiness”, and although some of us might say yes, we all know deep in our hearts that money can’t buy happiness. One thing that might be true is that money can grant a sense of satisfaction and maybe a bit of happiness. However, it is never long term. Research shows that our emotional well-being rises along with our income, up to a certain point. However, when I ask myself this question, I think long term, and when I think of happiness, I don’t necessarily think about money. But, what does bring happiness?

Can money buy happiness? No, money cannot buy happiness. Money can buy many things, like clothes, food, and shelter; but not happiness. As I mentioned, money can grant satisfaction, like getting a pair of new shoes or looking at your paycheque. However, those things are short term. Things that can grant happiness in my opinion must make you happier for longer than a couple of months. Happiness is an emotional state, and things that can be bought are physical. Perhaps there are memories that are made because of the money, like spending money on a trip to Disneyworld, or celebrating your birthday on a yacht. Memories of these times may bring happiness, but I still wouldn’t give money all the credit for the happiness. There are many things which money can’t buy, like important relationships and most of the memories we make in life. A saying my mom always tells me

is that money comes and goes in our lives, but things that truly make us happy always stay. That saying always sticks with me because even though we need money to survive in this world and everything comes with a price, happiness doesn’t come with a price. Happiness can be made with the right people and things in your life.

If happiness can’t be bought, then where does it come from? My research shows me three things that ultimately bring most people happiness – close relationships, a job/hobby, and helping others. Close relationships are very important. The people you are close to are the people you need in your life to keep you happy, to help you, to take care of you, and most importantly, to talk and listen to you. These close relationships can be between anyone, like you and your best friend, or even your family.

A job or hobby can also make you happy. It is a great way to occupy yourself and to do something fulfilling. Growing up, I always loved to paint, draw, and create. Art has become my hobby, and it is also a great way to focus my mind and not have distractions. A job can be something you can enjoy doing, too! If you enjoy your work, it becomes something you naturally devote yourself to. Someone who loves animals could enjoy your work as a vet, or someone who loves the culinary arts may enjoy their job as a chef. In my case, I think I would enjoy my job as a paid artist. Finally, helping others has been scientifically proven to

bring happiness. Helping others promote a physiological change in your brain that is linked to happiness. We experience happiness when helping others because we can feel helpful. Happiness is the reward we achieve when we help others.

Overall, money does not

equal happiness. It may help bring us instant gratification or temporary fulfilment, but true happiness is long-term. For me, money can help me get art supplies. However, it is the act of participating in a creative process that truly brings me happiness.



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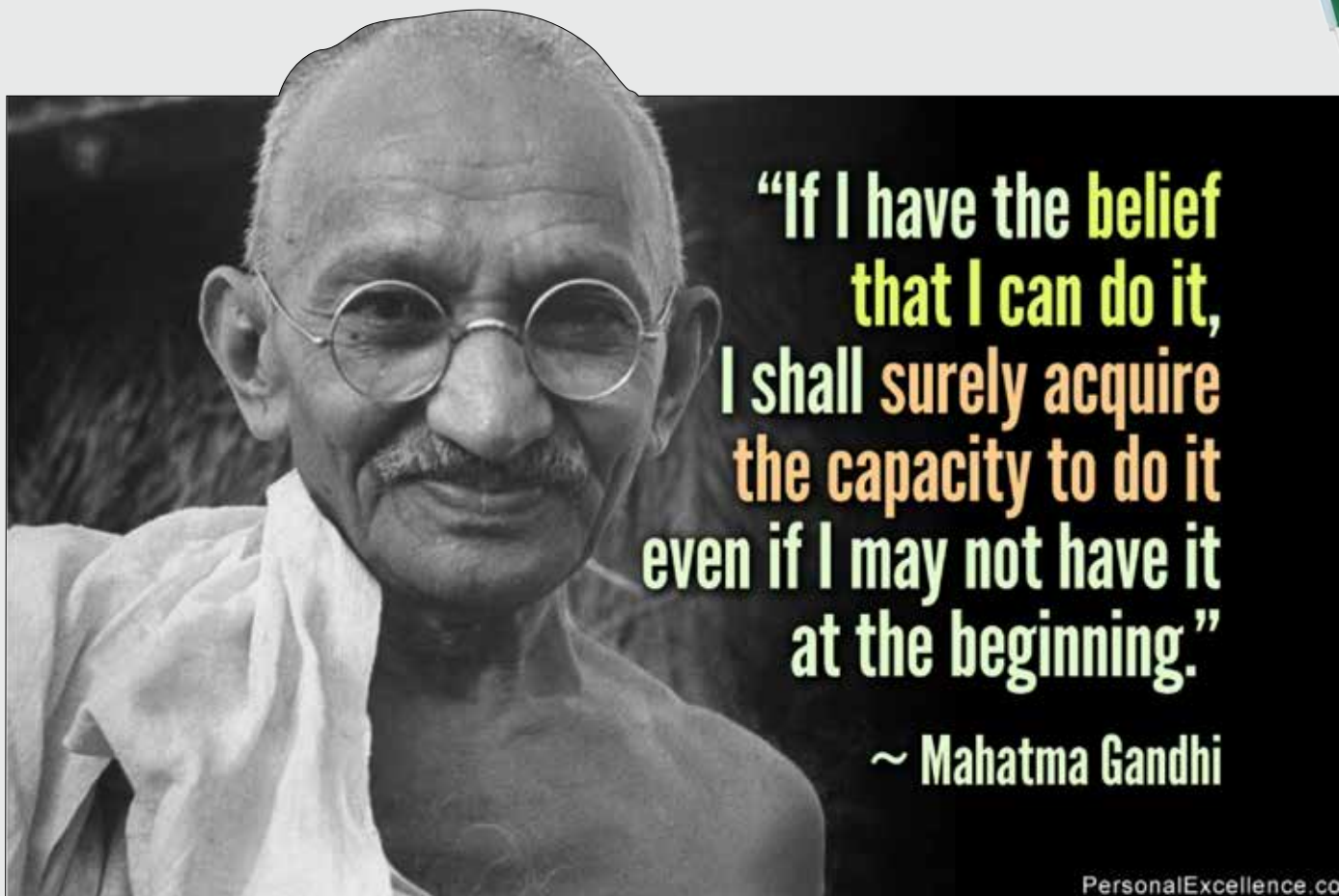
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SPECIAL FEATURE

Remembering the Creator of India's Independence Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on his 73rd Death Anniversary



By Siva Sivapragasam

FIFTEENTH AUGUST 1947 WAS A DAY OF REJOICING FOR EVERY INDIAN - EXCEPT FOR ONE PERSON. IRONICALLY, HE WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSONALITY RESPONSIBLE FOR INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE ON THIS DAY.

That person was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, fondly remembered as the Mahatma or Baabuji.

Gandhi is remembered all over the world even today as the "Apostle of Peace" and for his strong belief in Satyagraha and non-violence as the best weapons to win demands. Albert Einstein remarked that "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a man as Gandhi walked this earth".

Just as the mid-night hour approached on the night before independence, Jawarhalal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India was waxing

his eloquence with his famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech in Parliament, while Gandhi was fasting and observing 15th August as a day of mourning.

Why did Gandhi not rejoice Independence Day?

The Answer lies in his thinking about the Partitioning?

"Generations to come will scarce believe that such a man as Gandhi walked this earth,""

- Albert Einstein

The partitioning of India was looming large in the minds of everyone. To prevent the fragmentation and fracture of India, Gandhi suggested to Jawarhalal Nehru that Mohamed Ali Jinnah be made the first Prime Minister of Independent India. Nehru refused - Not because he was eyeing the post but because he feared a backlash by the Hindus. Gandhi was perturbed and became a sad man that he had to agree to something he dreaded. This left a permanent scar in his mind.

It was Gandhi who introduced Satyagraha as a form of non-violent pro-

test and it required inner-discipline and total commitment to non-violence, not easy for normal mortals to follow. It was in later years that several politicians followed this principle of Satyagraha to win their demands without spilling blood.

Gandhi was admired even by his enemies. Naturam Godse, who killed him, first bent down, and prayed at his feet before he fired the shots. He admitted in court that he killed Gandhi not because he loved Gandhi less, but because he loved India more.

The whole of India went into darkness hearing his assassination. Nehru, addressing the nation in a choking fashion, stated that "the light in our lives has gone out and there is darkness everywhere. Our beloved leader whom we call Baapu is no more" Nehru who has been with Gandhi all his life wept like a child unashamedly.

When Gandhi mounted the steps of Buckingham Palace in his loin cloth and shawl, the British sneered at him. Undaunted, he sat at the roundtable conference. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill contemptuously referred to him as the "half-naked fakir" and stated that "we are handing over power to men of straw".

Churchill's prophecy had gone wrong. India remains a vibrant democracy even with its flaws, and towers high as a world-power being the envy of all.



Why the RRSP may be our most important Tax planning tool

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

Most people know the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) as the must-use retirement savings account. But did you know that the RRSP is a powerful tax planning tool, too? With the February deadline for RRSP contributions fast approaching, now is a goodtime to look at the RRSP from a tax planning perspective.

When you contribute to an RRSP, that money is tax exempted for as long as you keep it in the plan and, even better, your contributions will reduce your overall tax burden each year.

A spousal RRSP is another potential tax-planning tool for higher income Canadians. These accounts are in one spouse's name-often a lower income earner- but the other, higher earning spouse, can contribute and receive the tax deduction on his or her taxes. This will reduce the contribution room of the higher earning spouse, but when the RRSPs are accessed in retirement, there will be two smaller incomes instead of one big income so the couple will save on taxes.

And while you may have every good intention of matching or increasing your contribution from last year-it can be difficult and stressful to come up with a significant amount of cash in short order. I can show you a number of strategies to consider that can help accelerate your plan using assets you have readily available and key tax planning benefits.

If you have made less than your maximum annual RRSP contribution in the past, a lump sum contribution

could allow you to catch up. You are allowed to make up for unused contribution room that you have accumulated from past years-which can also generate a significant tax refund.

It may be to your benefit to move money you currently have in savings accounts or other investments into your RRSP sooner than later. Moving these dollars into your RRSP will not only result in a reduction of your annual tax bill-but it also allows you to maximize growth inside your RRSP.

You can also withdraw from a Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) to make your RRSP contribution. Any withdrawals from your TFSA are Tax-free and are added to the available TFSA contribution room the following year. The tax refund can be used as TFSA contribution the following year.

A Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC) program is a great strategy for getting the maximum amount of money into your RRSP eligible investments. When you PAC, you are simply setting up a regular payment plan-usually an automatic withdrawal from your bank account-in an amount you can afford. A regular PAC becomes part of your budget as a monthly cash outflow that you probably won't miss and removes the temptation to spend those available dollars for personal consumption.

In many cases, borrowing to take full advantage of RRSP contribution room makes sense. Maximizing your RRSP contribution now offers immediate tax savings this year and tax-de-



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ferred potential growth for many years to come. This strategy works best when the interest rate is low enough and you repay the loan as quickly as possible, preferably in one year or two at the most.

Preparing for retirement should start early with a savings strategy that will make it possible for you to accumulate the most wealth for use (and enjoyment!) through all your retirement years. The best retirement savings strategy for most Canadians is a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) because your contributions and all the income that accumulates in your plan are tax deferred until you start using that money in retirement. 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. When retirement time rolls around, your RRSP may be a significant source of your retirement income.

Year after year, many Canadians leave a key financial opportunity

on the table by not contributing the maximum allowable amount into their RRSP. People come up with many excuses for not contributing an RRSP. Often we hear comment that "What is the point of putting money into RRSP if when you take the money out you have to pay tax on it?" When you contribute to RRSP, you get a tax deduction and for many of you, you receive a tax refund. If you did something constructive with the tax refund like paying down debts, then the fact that you have to pay tax on your RRSP withdrawals becomes irrelevant. By having the benefit of deferring that tax, you end up with significant more money in your retirement savings.

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, and / or to arrange a free educational seminar, please contact me.

“Pottuvil to Polikandy”:

Tamil activists hold protest rally in Sri Lanka journeying from East to North

Feb 3: Tamil political and civil society groups in Sri Lanka held a protest rally on Wednesday, highlighting the grievances being faced by the community and demanding justice for civilians killed and disappeared during the civil war in the island nation.

As per UN figures, up to 40,000 civilians were killed by the security forces during then Mahinda Rajapaksa's regime that brought an end to nearly three decades of civil war in Sri Lanka with the defeat of LTTE in 2009. Both the government troops and the Tamil Tiger rebels are accused of war crimes.

According to the protest organisers, the rally saw a huge participation, despite police obtaining court orders to stop it. The four-day protest march started from Pottuvil town in the eastern Amparai district and it would end at Polikandy in the northern Jaffna district on February 6. The protest came days after the UN Human Rights Office last week called for an “international action to ensure justice for international crimes” allegedly committed during the 26-year civil war. Sri Lanka has rejected the report. The protest aims at highlighting several issues being faced by the Tamil community in Lanka.

The protesters allege that lands owned by Tamils are being grabbed and Tamil areas are being systematically populated with the majority Sinhala community since the military conflict ended in 2009 in Lanka. They also claim that Tamil political prisoners continue to languish in jails under the prevention of terrorism laws.

Members of Sri Lanka's main Tamil party -- Tamil National Alliance (TNA) -- said the court orders were served on politicians, preventing them from taking part in the peaceful protest



march. They alleged that while protests are being allowed to take place in the Sinhala majority south of the island, Tamils in the north and east are being discriminated. Tamil National Alliance parliamentarian M A Sumanthiran said the demonstration aims at raising awareness on the government's continuous restrictions imposed on the minorities, illegal acquirement of lands belonging to the people in the North and East, urging the release of Tamil political prisoners, and to protest all forms of human rights violations in Sri Lanka, the Colombo Gazette reported. The demonstration is carried out to also highlight issues surrounding the wages of estate workers, cremation of the remains of Muslim COVID victims and those reported missing during the civil war in Sri Lanka, he said.

- PTI



PASSING OF CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY LEADER

MR. AMAR ERRY

STATEMENT FROM MARKHAM MAYOR FRANK SCARPITTI

It is with great sadness that I share news of the passing of Shri Amar Erry.

A champion for diversity and inclusion, Mr. Erry was a respected spiritual leader in our Arya Samaj Hindu community and a friend to many. He was a leader in the Indo-Canadian community and cornerstone of the Hindu faith congregation in Markham. I first met Mr. Erry in the late 1980s during the initial planning of the Vedic Cultural Centre, which now graces our community with its beauty and prominence.

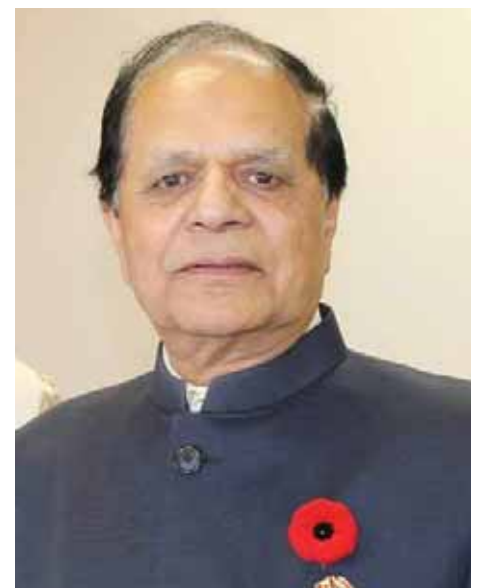
A passionate and dedicated community volunteer, Mr. Erry sat on many

boards and committees, including the Canadian Federation of Intercultural Friendship, Taste of Asia, to name a few. He participated in various interfaith discussions through the Intercultural Dialogue Institute and helped bring about more harmony and collaboration between religious groups in our community. He was a recipient of the Deeds Speak Award by York Regional Police for his contributions to promoting and celebrating diversity. His passing represents a great loss to our community and I have asked that flags at the Markham Civic Centre be lowered in his honour.

On behalf of Members of Council

and the City of Markham, I offer my sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Amar Erry and I salute the memory of a man that dedicated his life to bringing people together. On a personal level, I always respected his words of wisdom and advice, which was often given in the spirit of who he really was, a true gentleman. We will never forget his immense contributions to Markham. My thoughts and prayers are also with his friends, spiritual followers and the members of the Vedic Cultural Centre.

Frank Scarpitti,
Mayor of Markham




COMMUNITY WATCH

Canadian Tamil Congress Celebrates 14th Annual Thai Pongal & Tamil Heritage Month Virtually

January 31 2021

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) hosted its 14th annual Thai Pongal & Tamil Heritage Month Celebration on January 30th, 2021. This year the event was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and attracted many thousands of viewers across the world. The event continued to showcase the achievements of the Tamil community in Canada and highlighted CTC's many accomplishments in 2020.

The virtual celebration event was attended by several dignitaries, including elected officials from all levels of Government in Canada as well as leaders from India and Sri Lanka. Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary of the Foreign Affairs, Garnett Genuis MP (Shadow Minister of International Development & Human Rights), Toronto Mayor John Tory, Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, Jaffna Mayor Visvalingam Manivannan, Batticaloa Mayor Thiyagarajah Saravanapavan and City of Toronto Councillor Jennifer McKelvie were some of these dignitaries who also brought greetings to the event.

Other dignitaries who also provided greetings, either live or recorded at the event included Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Hon. Mary Ng, Federal Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance from the Province of Ontario, Shaun Chen MP, Salma Zahid MP, Marci Ien MP



Hon. Ma Foi K. Pandiarajan
Service Excellence Award 2021

and Logan Kanapathi MPP.

This year's "Service Excellence Award" was presented to Hon. Ma Foi K. Pandiarajan, Tamil Nadu Minister for Tamil Official Language, Tamil Culture and Archeology for his contribution for advancement and promotion of Tamil language.

The Leaders for Change Award was presented to Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingam (USA) for his unique contribution as a volunteer educator, coach, humanitarian as well as a human rights and peace activist.

Sivan Ilanko, president of the



Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingam
Leaders for Change Award 2021

Canadian Tamil Congress noted "we have made significant progress towards establishing a Chair in Tamil Studies at the University of Toronto with over \$2.3 million collected thus far in donations and pledges". Ilanko reminded members of the community to stay safe in this terrible pandemic by following the all applicable public health guidelines.

This year the CTC Women in Leadership award was presented to Sothymalar Paramsothy for her extraordinary community service in multiple areas in Canada and war affected

regions of Sri Lanka.

The event also featured captivating dance performances by the students of Smt. Smt. Jenani Kumar's Shilompoli Shethra Dance Academy, renowned multi-instrumentalist Sruthi Balamurali and Singer and Song Composer Kandappu Jeyanthan from Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.

The CTC would like to thank the thousands of guests who participated virtual at the event from across the world.

Music maestro SPB receives India's prestigious Padma Vibhushan Award posthumously

By Siva Sivapragasam

SP Balasubrahmanyam, considered a playback music maestro, and who passed away last year following coronavirus complications, was conferred the Padma Vibhushan award posthumously recently on India's Republic Day.

The recognition came 10 years after the celebrated musician was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan Award.

In a playback music career spanning over five decades, SPB won six National Film Awards for Best Male Playback Singer and 25 Nandi Awards. Balasubrahmanyam's melodious voice was revered by fans of all age groups for his unparalleled contribution to Indian music. He held a Guinness World record for singing over 40,000 songs.

Besides singing in movies across 16 languages including Tamil, Telu-

gu Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi, SP Balasubrahmanyam also played significant roles in many films. Among the movies in which he acted included Keladi Kanmani (1990), Thiruda Thiruda (1993), Kadhalan (1994) and Ullaasam (1996).

The entire film fraternity was deeply shattered with the demise of SPB. AR

Rahman, Kamal Haasan, Rajanikanth, Akshay Kumar and Anil Kapoor are among the many celebrities across the film industry who took to Twitter to mourn the singer's demise. "Our cultural world is a lot poorer today" tweeted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi after SPB's passing away.





Conserving the Meaning of Rituals



By Danesh Thirukumaran

Attempting to understand Tamil culture typically involves analyzing a deeply rooted language, majestic temples, enriching art and music, and a flavorful cuisine. However, when it comes to understanding the culture on an individual basis, differences may emerge regarding which aspects different individuals choose to embrace. Growing up as a second-generation immigrant has taught me this distinction.

Although many Tamils have been pushed away from their homeland, a profound culture remains. Rituals, a key component of Tamil Hindu culture, have a goal to unify us regardless of space and time. They connect us to fellow community members across the globe as well as to our ancestors, providing a sense of belonging. Ushering our culture into a new era requires an understanding behind the meaning of these rituals. Funeral last rites and rituals are uncommonly discussed yet hold deep meaning when transitioning the lives of our loved ones. Conserving this tradition enables a unique connection to our ancestors, providing a feeling of comfort during an uncertain time.

Recently enduring the passing of my mother, I was faced with a saddening and unfamiliar situation. There is never a proper time to confront death, despite how ready one may think they are. Motifs of grief and suffering pervade the rituals and period following. However, embracing the

rituals helped me find meaning in life in general, as well as solidify the values Tamil Hindu culture instills.

When preparing my mother for cremation, a final purification of her body was performed. This was to cleanse and surrender her with holy water and sacred substances to prepare her for whatever is to come next in her afterlife. Devotion to my mother here was eminent. Valuing devotion helps one focus on the purposes of their actions and prioritize the important things in their life. In this case, the devotion to my mother was symbolized through this final holy bath and assisted in adequately reflecting on her life in the days to come.

Conserving the meaning of these practices also allows for closure in a disparate time in one's life. When the ritual preparing my mother for cremation was coming to a close, I circumambulated my mother's body while carrying a large pot filled with water. A priest followed behind me, striking the pot, breaking it as I made each round. More and more water spilled onto my mother's body. This portion of the ritual signified the end of my current relationship with her. Water is often denoted as a symbol of life, and the water bathing her initiates the beginning of her next journey. Once the pot was emptied of its contents, I walked away from my mother's body without turning back; this further symbolized the end of our relationship as we once knew it, moving onto the next chapter of life, for both her and I.

Unity, a prominent value conveyed amongst the last rites and rituals, carried a feeling of belonging on this Earth. Hindu last rites reflect the premise that our lives are a microcosm of the genuine nature of the universe. Offering food to birds and returning my mother's ashes to the Earth displayed an interconnectedness that is held between all of us and the universe itself.

Understanding the symbolism provided by our traditions is important. The meaning and acts of the last rites and rituals connect us through time to our ancestors who performed these same rituals once before. The overarching questions about life prevalent when encountering the death of a loved one may lead to fear and emptiness. Filling this void with the love of those around us, as well as through the love of our ancestors conveyed through their teachings and practices help us adjust to a new normal. The transience of life itself is a crucial teaching bestowed upon us from our ancestors. This understanding comforts us to continue our lives, to survive the trials and tribulations inherently present in life. To continue to advance our culture, preserving traditional practices is necessary to uniquely connect commonly held values and beliefs within our community, mentoring generations to come and ensuring their prosperity no matter what they may face.

(This article first appeared in the Canadian Tamil Congress' (CTC) annual publication "Voice 2021")



MONSOON KITCHEN

GENIE SISTERS SAMAYAL SANTHAI



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

Eat more, learn more!

Sisters Niranjini Mandalia and Rajini Nathan are both food enthusiasts from England. Niranjini, who lives in London, has a degree in Human Biology and is a trained chef. She makes it her business to know everything about what she eats, from nutritional value to source producers. Follow her food obsession on Instagram @ninjaeatsfood.

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

Paneer ghee roast

With the world looking for more and more ways to incorporate a vegetarian diet, our culture and surroundings enables us to have a playground of ingredients to switch up and enjoy. The traditional ghee roast is usually made with a non-vegetarian protein however, we have a vegetarian version that any meat-eater would love! Ghee during winter months is essential as it helps keep the body warm and contrary to popular belief, it aids with metabolism. Here is our take on a paneer ghee roast, guaranteed to warm up your insides this winter.



Ingredients:

✓ 500g block of firm paneer ✓ 1 red Indian/Ceylon onion, diced ✓ ½ tsp cumin seeds ✓ 2 dry red chillies ✓ 1 green chilli, chopped (optional) ✓ 1 tsp ginger and garlic paste ✓ 1 tbsp tomato purée ✓ 4 tbsp melted ghee ✓ ½ cup of water ✓ ¼ tsp turmeric powder ✓ 1 tbsp Jaffna curry powder ✓ ½ lime, juice squeezed ✓ 2 tbsp coriander leaves, chopped

Method:

Cut the paneer into large slabs. To a pan, add half the ghee and set heat to medium. Add the paneer slabs and brown on all sides. Remove from pan and dice into smaller cubes. Alternatively you can also use an air fryer and 1 tbsp of ghee to prepare the paneer.

Add the remaining ghee to the pan and to this add cumin seeds and dry red chillies. Add the diced onion and soften. Next, throw in the ginger and garlic paste. Once the ginger and garlic paste has browned, you can add in the chopped green chillies, if you are using them, and then add the tomato purée, turmeric, curry powder, salt and water and let it all simmer together for a couple of minutes.

Next, add the chopped paneer pieces. Mix well, squeeze in the lime juice and sprinkle in the

chopped coriander and mix. Cook covered for another 5 minutes on a low heat and your paneer ghee roast will be done.

As always, we want to see your creations! Tag us in your pictures on Instagram, using

#monsoonjournal, or send us a picture via email. If you are looking for a particular recipe, send us an email at toronto@monsoonjournal.com - your request could be on the next Monsoon Kitchen!

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MARRIAGE BUREAU (CHRISTIAN NON R.C.) (Sri Lanka)

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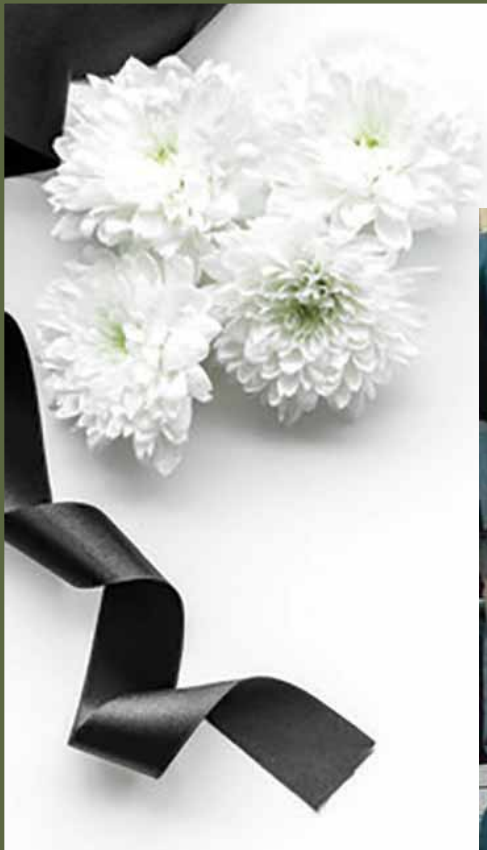


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OBITUARY



CHRISTOPHER VISWASAM

A well-respected former civil servant from the prestigious Civil Service in Sri Lanka, Christopher Robert Viswasam, known and loved by all as Sunny, passed away peacefully on Wednesday the 6th of January 2021. He was born in Matale, Sri Lanka in April 1926 and was a Canadian since April 1993.

His career spanned across the Sri Lankan (Ceylon) Civil Service, the United Nations stationed in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Tanzania. After retirement he worked in the private sector until he migrated to Canada. A quiet, unassuming, non-judgmental, well mannered, well read and learned gentleman through and through.

He was the beloved husband of Theresa Leilawathy Easterine Viswasam (nee Navaratnam) and together they celebrated over 60 years of wedded bliss.

He was the oldest son of late Mr. Albert Benjamin Viswasam and late Mrs. Esther Pakiam Viswasam (nee Satgunam). He is predeceased by his siblings, Theodore Percival Viswasam, Ernest Samuel Viswasam, Dorothy Viswasam, Dennis Benjamin Viswasam and their late spouses Esme, Manel and Thilaka (Tikki).

Brother-in-law to Dr. Anton Navaratnam and Selvathy Joseph (nee Navaratnam) and their spouses Norah Navaratnam and the late Mr. Sylvester Joseph.

Father to Chrisanthi Muthiah, Gerard Dilharan Viswasam, Christopher Renuharan Viswasam and Anselm Vidyaharan Viswasam. Father-in-law to Dr. Mahendran Muthiah and Dr. Seshantri Viswasam (nee Namasivayam).

Doting grandfather of Miran, Dushka, Aisha, Asante, Sachin and Sahanya and loving great grandfather to Maxwell, Leon, Priya, Yasmin, Rudy, and Leila.

His Cremation took place on Wednesday 13th. January 2021.



Senior oncologist and chairperson of the Adyar Cancer Institute Dr. Shanta passes away



My Home is the Cancer Institute" – Dr. Shanta

By Siva Sivapragasam

Dr. V. Shanta, doyen of cancer care in India, senior oncologist, and chairperson of the Cancer Institute (WIA) Adyar, died recently. She was 93 at the time of her demise.

Sources at the Cancer Institute said she had a complexed arterial block that could not be rectified. Her body was later moved to the old Cancer Institute premises, which she helped build along with her mentor S. Krishnamurthi.

In her medical career spanning for over 60 years, she focused on several aspects of the disease which included organizing care for patients, study of the disease, prevention and control, creation of specialists and scientists in different aspects of oncologic sciences. She played a key role along with Dr. Krishnamurthi in the development of the institute from a cottage hospital of 12 beds to a comprehensive cancer centre.

Dr. Shanta was the recipient of the Padma Shri Award in 1986, Padma Bhushan in 2006 and Padma Vibhushan in 2016. She was conferred the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service in 2005. In addition, she had received many other national and international awards. She did not want any final rituals to be performed and wished that her ashes should be sprinkled all over the institute. Dr. Shanta was laid to rest with full police honours.

The Adyar Cancer Institute where she worked for several long years was so close to her heart that she once remarked "My Home is the Cancer Institute".

A scholarly professional and quintessential Jaffna man

Brahman died peacefully on December 28, in Fairfax, Virginia. He had just celebrated his 84th birthday one week earlier. He and his three children were fortunate to see each other before he passed.

He was predeceased by his loyal and beloved wife Vijayalakshmi and he is survived by his two loving daughters and son, Narayani, Dharshana and Sanjeevan, his daughter-in-law Maya and also his brother and sister, Dr. Pratab Sivaprakasapillai and Dr. Premala Sivasegaram. In addition, he was a very involved grandfather to his three grandchildren, Neel, Vaishnavi, and Nitish.

He was born on December 16, 1936 in Colombo to late Professor Thambyahapillai and Leelamani Sivaprakasapillai. Brahman entered Royal College in 1947 and achieved a remarkable academic and professional record from here. He was admitted to the Faculty of Engineering, University of Sri Lanka and obtained a First Class Honours degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1959. He proceeded to the United Kingdom where he undertook postgraduate research in Aeronautics and earned his PhD from Imperial College, London in 1964. He stayed on in the U.K. to serve as a Research Engineer at the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride, until 1968.

He returned to Sri Lanka and joined the State Engineering Corporation where he was actively

involved in with national research and development. He was known in Sri Lanka for his design and manufacture of pumps and dredger. In 1978, he joined the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva in 1978 and he served very closely with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Subsequent to this appointment, Brahman and his family relocated to New York where he joined the United Nations and later did engineering consultation.

Brahman is my elder first cousin, our fathers were brothers. I remember fondly how we would regularly meet to celebrate birthdays. After each get-together I would return home and my mother would give me a hard time saying that Brahman is a model son and student and why couldn't I be like him. Brahman's classmates also looked up to him. One of his Royal College friends, Gnanam Supramaniam, recalls, "Whenever a teacher posed a question to the class on any subject, the whole class would turn round and look at Brahman. Brahman's hand would surely be up. He had the ready answer."

When Brahman moved to New York, our families became even closer. Brahman, myself, and eight other families from Sri Lanka created what we dubbed the "Thanksgiving Group". This group became our U.S. family and we celebrated Thanksgivings, Christmases, and New Years together for over 30+ years.

All of us were in awe of his self-confidence and



Dr. Brahman Sivaprakasapillai

the breadth of his knowledge in a variety of fields – politics, history, literature, music, science, religion, and languages. He became an avid New York Yankees fan and could talk for hours with friends about baseball.

One interesting anecdote that makes many of us laugh is when Brahman was elected President of the Sri Lanka Association of New York. He addressed his committee members with this, "I will communicate with you through email. If it is urgent and I need to call you, I will call collect, being a Jaffna man."

May his soul rest in peace. We will miss him.

Dr. Sanath Nallainathan

(Courtesy: Sunday Times)


COMMUNITY WATCH

CNN TV host Larry King

"The King of Talk is no more"

By Siva Sivapragasam

Larry King, the longtime CNN TV host who always began his interviews with his signature line "Welcome to Larry King Live", and considered a TV icon through his interviews with countless newsmakers and his sartorial sensibilities, has died at age 87.

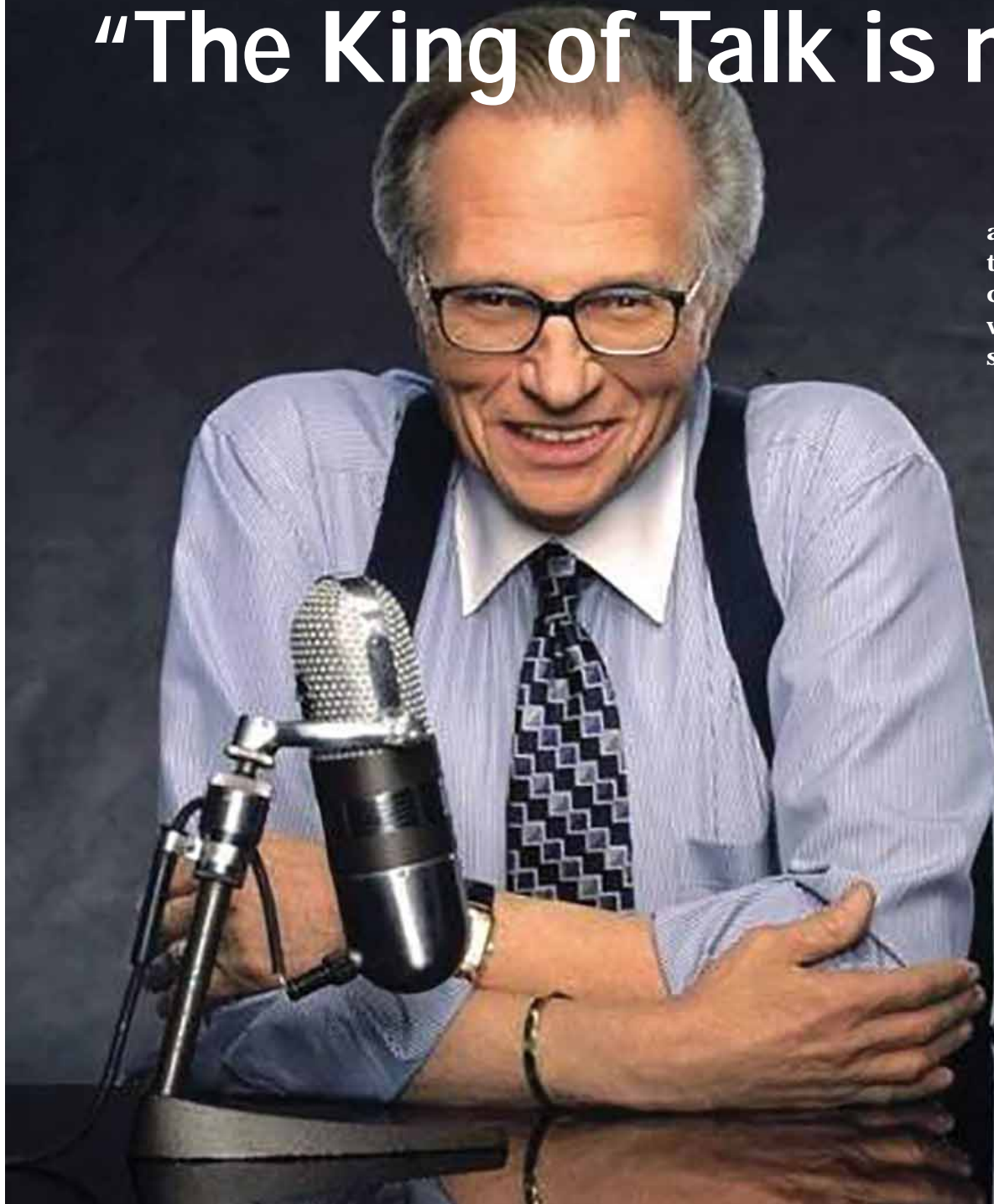
King hosted "Larry King Live" on CNN for over 25 years, interviewing presidential candidates, celebrities, athletes, movie stars and everyday people. He retired in 2010 after taping more than 6,000 episodes of the show.

He began his media career as a disc jockey interviewing every president from Ford to Obama. His longest relationship was with the microphone and admitted that his most difficult coverage was the 911 episode.

King battled many health problems, suffering several heart attacks. In 1987, he underwent quintuple bypass surgery, inspiring him to establish the Larry King Cardiac Foundation to assist those without insurance. His unique and lasting talent as a broadcaster was world recognized.

Larry King broke news and broke ground. His talk show was CNN's most-watched program, and King was arguably the network's biggest star.

"I just love what I do," he once said, "I love asking questions, I love doing the interviews."
"Larry King Live is now Larry King no more"



Philip Fernando

(Former Deputy Editor – Daily News & Sunday Observer)

By: Siva Sivapragasam

The passing away of my good friend and Lake House colleague Philip Fernando in California was indeed sad news after the 2021 new year was born.

Philip and I were contemporaries at the Peradeniya University and graduated with an Economics Honours Degree before joining Lake House.

My memories of Philip go back to the days when both of us jointly covered news for the Daily News together. We were often referred to as "Twin Journalists".

Our usual haunt on Wednesdays were the homes of Ministers Kalugalle and Maithripala Senanayake for Cabinet meeting scoops. Minister Kalugalla will entertain us with Jaffna mangoes before the conversation begins.

Some evenings were spent by us at parties hosted by Diplomats, by invitation of course. One other source for our news was Sravasti, the hostel for Parliamentarians. Lake House Editorial boss Esmond Wickremesinghe and I attended Philip's wedding together in Kalutara. Esmond also attended my wedding too skipping a Reuters Conference in London

The two of us covered the Colombo international conference during the time of the Indo China war

and were stationed at the Galle Face Hotel to get news regarding the conference from the diplomats staying there. When we put up a voucher for our expenses at the hotel Editor Cecil Graham was rather reluctant to approve

it because of the amount involved and wanted us to get MD Esmond to sanction it. Esmond laughed and jokingly said to us "Were the two of you drinking all 24 hours", and signed it saying, "You deserve it for the wonderful coverage you have done". Those were the days of good journalism and the rewards that went with it.

In 1977, Philip and his family immigrated to US and settled in Torrance, California. He put his writing ability to good use in his second career. He had a successful career as a city planner for various California cities and retired at 65 from the Southern California Air Quality Management District (AQMD).

Philip was a good conversationalist and liked by his contacts for his wit and humour. When the News Editor of the Daily News at that time Harold Pieris was occasionally short of a good lead story for the next day, Philip and I came to his rescue and provided one. My last meeting with Philip was several years ago when he visited me in Toronto after my heart surgery. Philip is survived by his loving wife, Celine Fernando, 2 sons Ranil (Noely) and Mahen (Thilini) and 3 daughters, Anne Samarawickrama (Prasanna), Melisa Gunawardena (Sanjay),



and Marlie Abrahams (Andrew) along with eight grandchildren.

"You had a good innings at the wicket my good friend. May your soul rest in eternal peace."



APPOINTMENTS

Nazhat Shameem Khan has been elected President of the United Nations Human Rights Council



Nazhat Shameem Khan has been elected President of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Nazhat Shameem (born 1960) is a Fijian judge and diplomat serving as the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations since 2014. In 1999, she was appointed Fiji's first woman High Court judge. Ms. Khan was a legal practitioner and legal consultant, training judges in Fiji on human rights, sentencing, and criminal justice.

She is a graduate of Sussex University and Cambridge University, and a Barrister of the Inner Temple in London. She holds a Master of Laws and a Master of Philosophy in criminology.

Indian American Sumona Guha becomes Senior Director for South Asia in US new Administration



Indian American Sumona Guha has been appointed the Senior Director for South Asia at the National Security Council.

Ms Guha co-chaired the South Asia foreign policy working group on the Biden-Harris campaign, and was a member of the transition team. She will succeed the Trump administration's Lisa Curtis in the role.

Ms Guha, a former Foreign Service officer, has been a Senior Vice President since mid-2018 at the Albright Stonebridge Group, whose chair is former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Chatura Cabraal appointed Director Renuka City Hotels PLC



Renuka City Hotels PLC has announced the appointment of Chatura V. Cabraal as an Independent Non-executive Director of the company with effect from 13 January 2021. Chatura V. Cabraal is a Graduate (with Honours) in Mechanical Engineering (BSc.) with a focus in manufacturing and design from the Missouri University of Science and Technology, USA. Cabraal serves as a board member on the Export Development Board of Sri Lanka.

With the latest appointment the Board of Renuka City Hotels Plc comprises of Ravi Thambiayah (Chairman), N.A. Thambiayah (Deputy chairman), S.R. Thambiayah (Joint Managing Director), A.L. Thambiayah (Deputy Managing Director), N.R. Thambiayah, M.A. Jayawardena, R.S. Tissanayagam, T. Dharmarajah and C.V. Cabraal.

Bharat Ramamurthi appointed to US National Economic Council by President Biden



US President-elect Joe Biden has named Indian American Bharat Ramamurthi as one of the three new members of the National Economic Council that coordinates domestic and international economic policymaking process for the administration.

Born in Massachusetts, Ramamurthi is a graduate of Harvard College and Yale Law School, is the Managing Director of the Corporate Power programme at the Roosevelt Institute, a liberal think-tank. He was an aide of Senator Elizabeth Warren for seven years and served as her economic adviser during her 2020 presidential election campaign. As Warren's aide, he also led the investigation of Wells Fargo.

Quotable Quotes - 2020

By: Siva Sivapragasam

“They said it”



“This is America's Day. This is Democracy's day. Democracy is fragile. Democracy has prevailed.”

-- US President Joe Biden at the Inauguration Ceremony



“We believe roughly four and 4.5 million high - risk Canadians will have to be vaccinated before we can really get back to reopening the economy and we can achieve that within 100 days if we have the vaccines”

- Royal Bank CEO Dave McKay on reviving the economy from the Pandemic.



“The road ahead of us is not easy. But America is ready. So are Joe and Me. While I am the first woman Vice- President, I will not be the last”

- Kamala Harris, US Vice- President



“The new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light. If only we are brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it.”

- Young Poet Amanda Gorman in her poem at the US inauguration ceremony



“We have a great industrial and commercial base of financial services, life sciences, technology, a quality of life ranked objectively as being among the top in the world”

- Toronto Mayor John Tory



SPECIAL FEATURE

SPREAD OF HINDUISM IN VIETNAM IN ARCHITECTURAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AREAS

Compiled by : KIDAMBI RAJ

Historical background of the spread of Hinduism in VIETNAM

Vietnam is widely known for its tolerance towards religion. Hinduism has impacted the world in the sense that it has risen to become one of the top three religions in the world today. About 14% of the world's population claims Hinduism as their religion. The Hinduism faith is considered to be one of the most religiously tolerant religions in the world. Our culture is worth preserving and as Hindus, we know that **dharma** is not optional. Dharma based Hindu Civilization, wherever found, is a testament to that which is best in humanity. As the 21st century draws, the Hindus of Bali, Vietnam and the world look to India as both the epicentre and foundation of Hinduism.

Chams that adhered to Hinduism were referred to as **Balamon Chams**. The term **Balamon** stems from the Hindu term **Brahma**, which they believed is the major metaphysical force that united all of life in existence. Stemming from the Hindu beliefs, the Chams (like their Khmer neighbours) began to excel in religiously themed carvings and artwork. Some of the major symbols of Saiva Hindu religion can be found in the relics of champa, like, **Linga**: A dark pillar made of stone, crafted to worship Lord Siva; **Mukhalinga**: A linga with the carved image of Lord Siva as a human being, or a Linga with a carved face supposedly belonging to Siva;

: A linga with a stylized interpretation of Siva's trademark hairstyle; **Segmented Liga**: A totem pillar with three different sections of carvings to represent three gods of the Hindu faith; **Brahma, Vishnu and Siva**; **Kosa**: A woven basket of precious metals created to be placed atop the linga. These elements were extremely important to the Champa Kings, and many would build them, naming the relics after themselves. While a great number of these relics have not survived into the present day, the best modern collection exists at the Cham Museum in Danang, Vietnam.

While today the Cham are Vietnam's only surviving Hindus, the nation once harbored some of the world's most exquisite and vibrant Hindu cultures. The entire region of Southeast Asia, in fact, was home to numerous Hindu kingdoms. **Champa was a formidable Hindu Kingdom**, renowned for its immense wealth and sophisticated culture. Its major port was Cattigara. Modern scholarship has confirmed Cattigara as the forerunner of Saigon (modern day **Ho Chi Minh City**). Cattigara was, in fact, the main port at the mouth of the **Mekong River**, a name derived from **Mae Nam Khong**, the **Mother Water Ganga**. In one of Mr. S. Swaminathan's, blog called **Ancient Sanskrit Inscriptions in Strange places**, he wrote, **The first Cham King that history knows is Sri Maran, identified as a Tamil ruler. The fact that a Pandyan kings by these names are spoken of in inscriptions and Tamil Sangam literature. The oldest Sanskrit inscription discovered in Vietnam mentions the name of Sri Maran. The inscription is known as the Vo-Canch inscription.** Another early



Mariamman-Hindu-Temple

Champa King was **Bhadravarman**, who ruled from 349-361CE. His capital was the citadel of **Simhapura** or **Lion City**, now called Tra Kieu. **Bhadravarman** built a number of temples, conquered his rivals, ruled well and in his final years abdicated his throne and spent his last days in India on the banks of **Ganges River**. Historic Champs was divided into five regions: **Indrapura** (present day Dong Duong) served as religious centre of the Kingdom; **Amaravati** is the present day Quang Nam province; **Vijaya** is now Cha Ban; **Kauthara** is the modern Nha Trang and **Panduranga** is known today simply as Phan. Panduranga was the last Cham territory to be conquered by the Sino-Vietnamese.

Many Hindu artifacts of significant historical value have been found in Vietnam. In 2001, 320 gold plaques were discovered, decorated with various Hindu divinities, such as Garuda, Narasimha, Kuram and Durga. These plaques have been identified as the earliest known Hindu iconographic images ever discovered in Southeast Asia.

The majority of Cham in Vietnam (also known as the **Eastern Cham**) are Hindus while their Cambodian counterparts are largely Muslims. Hindu Chams are



Den Subramaniam Swamy Temple

called **Balamon Cham** or **Balamon Hindus**. They practice a form of Shivite Brahminism. Most of the Cham Hindus belong to the Kshatriya caste, but a considerable minority are Brahmins. Balamon Cham is

one of two surviving non-Indic indigenous Hindu peoples. There are three Indian Hindu temples in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) **Mariamman Temple**, **Đền Subramaniam Swamy temple** and **Thendayuthapani temple**. The Mariamman Temple is their focal point. It is also considered sacred by many native Vietnamese and Chinese. It is also believed to have miraculous powers and is dedicated to the Hindu goddess Mariamman.

Temple built by South Indian Chettiar diaspora

The Chettiars are a mercantile community of Indian origin who traditionally are bankers and money lenders, and considered to be the real pioneers of modern day net banking. In the mid 19th century, a large group of Chettiars travelled and traded widely in South East Asia, looking for new opportunities, which brought them to set up a base in Saigon. Vietnam's sea line was luring and their trading enterprises flourished here, with many Chettiar even having their own ships. Their home turf lies in a place called Chettinad in the Province of Tamil Nadu in South India. They are a very close knit conservative

community worshipped the Goddess of rain, and built the Mariamman Temple in the heart of Saigon in late 19th century, in the same area that they owned shops and warehouses for large scale trading of goods such as rice and salt.

In a legend posted inside the temple walls, Goddess Mariamman is also worshipped as the healer of disease such as smallpox. The story tells of a beautiful woman called Nagavalli, who was the wife of one of the nine Rishis. Nagavalli was famed for her beauty, and one day when the rishi was not at home, the three-headed God, Trimurti visited her, but Nagavalli ignored Him and turned Him out of her house. Trimurti was so angry that He cursed her by disfiguring her beautiful face. Nagavalli became ugly with many **pock marks on her face and body**. When the rishi returned home, he was shocked to find a disfigured wife and hating her looks, he threw her out of the house saying that she would surely be born as a demon in her next life and spread the disease among people. Nagavalli left the house, and to survive she begged door to door for food, while fanning her body with **margosa leaves** to ward off the flies. Soon she was completely healed, and people from then on began to worship her as **Goddess Mari**, meaning **changed** and having the miraculous powers of healing disease and in particular, fertility in women.

In mid-July to mid-August, the **Aadi Monsoon** festival is held throughout Tamil Nadu, devoted entirely to Goddess Mariamman. This is a unique festival dedicated to all the perennial rivers and major lakes and the many water sources to celebrate the rising of the water levels in the monsoon season. This water ritual has been in practice since ancient times when it was patronized by kings and royal households.

THREE Important and OLD HINDU TEMPLES IN SAIGON

1. MARIAMMAN TEMPLE

Hindu temple still in active use in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) is a **little piece of Southern India** in the centre of Saigon. Though there are only 50 to 60 Hindus in Saigon and all of them Tamils, this temple is known in Vietnamese as **Chua Ba Mariamman**, is considered sacred by many ethnic Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese. Also, it is reputed to have miraculous powers. This temple was built at the end of the 19th century and dedicated to the **Hindu Goddess Mariamman**, another aspect of **Goddess Parvathy**. As the mother of the universe, Parvathy is **Amma** (mother) and prayed as **Amman**. Utsava Amman is placed next to the main deity. During the festivals, she is placed on the **Simha Vahana** and taken on procession along the roads of Ho Chi Minh City. Favourite offerings placed nearby often are **Joss Sticks, Jasmine, Lilies and Gladiolis**. The wooden stairs on the left as you enter the building, lead to the roof, where you will find two colourful towers covered with innumerable figures of Lions, Goddesses and Guardians. In addition, at the outer hall, Goddess Amman's (Parvathy's) sons Ganesha and Muruga are on Her right and left respectively.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Thenayuttha Panin Temple

The Rajagopuram of this temple is about 12 metres high with a number of statues. Colorful statues of Amman, Lakshmi, Ganesha, Muruga, Angels and dancing girls all decorate the entrance to the inner hall. The attractive features of this temple are the beautifully sculptured Amman in Her different forms as well as other deities. They include, Nataraja, Paramasiva,

of Lord Ganesha. Mouse is placed in front of Lord Ganesha. On the left side of Lord Muruga, Lord Venkateswara with Goddess Lakshmi and Aandal on His sides can be seen. The Vasantha Mandapam for Utsava Murthis is located at the right side of the entrance. Just outside the Garbhagraha, a well dressed guardian *Idumpan* (the first person to perform Kavadi to Lord Muruga) shrine is located. Near the temple entrance, a picture of Bala Krishna is housed in a specially made colourful Gopuram structure. A red painted Horse Vahanam can be seen in the main hall of the temple.

3. THENDAY YUTTHA PANIN TEMPLE

This is a very simple Hindu temple in Vietnam and it's really popular with the local people. Here you will find pictures of several gods and while you are visiting this place make sure to climb the rooftop to get the view of the whole city. This temple is a must be a first in your list when you are visiting Hindu temples in this country. Inside the temple, the regulations of the temple, both in Vietnamese and English are displayed. The writings in English are as follows:

1. The Thenday Yuttha Panin Temple worshipping Hindus are advised to comply with the religious belief.



Po Cham Nagar Temples

Brahma, Mahavishnu, Kaliyamman, Viramahaskthi, Chamundi, Thirumagal, Maheswari, Meenakshi, Valambigai, andal, Kamakshiamman, Karumari Amman, Sivagami and Parvathy with Murugan in Her lap. Devotees experienced the power of Mariamman for a number of years. Hence, this temple is most popular with the locals. This temple is now taking the necessary steps to bring a priest from India to conduct proper *Puja* in a regular basis. This is one of the famous Hindu temples in Vietnam and it was built in the 19th century by the Tamil merchants (*Chettians*) who came here for the purpose of trades.

2. DEN SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY TEMPLE

This place is located in Ho Chi Minh City at the heart of Saigon and was built by Indian merchants in the 19th century. The temple is famous for its *Navagrahas* with each one dressed in colored silk robes. You will get to see the pictures of Lord Shiva, Krishna, Goddess Lakshmi and other deities of Hindu religion. This very place has been neglected for years but now it is considered one of the most beautiful temples in Vietnam.

The main deity is *Lord Muruga with Valli and Deivayaani on His right and left sides respectively*. Lord Ganesha is located on the right side of Muruga. *Rahu and Kethu* are at the right and left sides

- Opening hours from 6 am to 7 pm specially on the first and 15th day of Lunar Calendar and on Hindu festive days are extended until 8 pm.
- Personnel of this Temple are not authorised to receive any money offered by the visitors or to accept any tips (Please drop your offerings in the charity box).
- Everybody is requested to protect the Temple property located in shrine and in the environment.
- Please observe order, keep silence, make no noise that will interfere with worship and others.
- Please do not enter the Almighty shrine through the inner sanctum.

OTHER HINDU TEMPLES IN VIETNAM

Besides the above mentioned three main temples, there seems to have been several other Hindu temples and most of them have been either fully or partially destroyed by the later kings. Still, most of the relics of the several temple structures are maintained as tourist attractions, because of the intricate workmanship of those structures. Short write-ups of some of those other Hindu Temples are given below.

4. Po Cham Nagar Tower

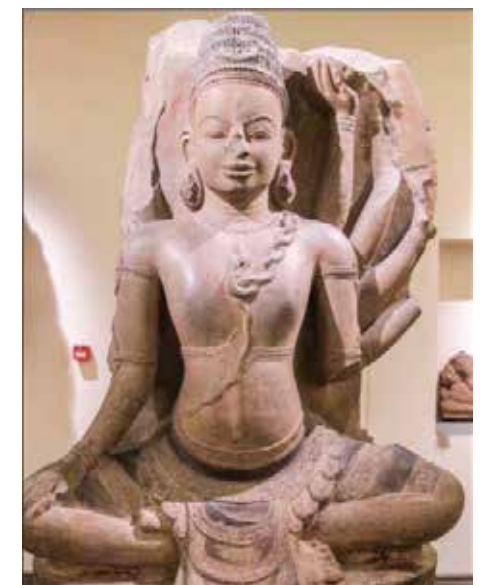
This is the sacred worship site from 2nd century AD, and it was constructed by the Cham King Satyavarman in 784 AD. This is one of the ancient Hindu temples in Vietnam and is dedicated to the goddess Yan Po Nagar, who is supposed to be the mother of the country. From 25 meters from here is another temple where the goddess is worshipped and it is believed that women with a child are blessed here. There are other towers too, dedicated to Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesha and so on. The traditional festival in Vietnam is Thap Ba and in this time the gods and goddesses are worshipped here.

5. My Son Sanctuary – UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE

In 1999, over a century after the French rediscovered My Son, UNESCO honoured the mystical Hindu Grounds as a World Heritage Site. Modern technology hasn't been able to recreate the extraordinary Cham brick building methods. Unlike the ancient bricks, the replacements aren't seamless and have already begun to crumble. My Son is a holy place full of secrets that may never be known. This is mainly a cluster of ruined ancient Hindu Temples in Hanoi, Vietnam. Among the ruins, My Son is the most popular one and it was constructed in 4th to 14th century AD, and these temples are dedicated to Lord Siva and other Hindu Gods as well. Cham began to build the My Son complex in honour of Lord Siva, a principal Hindu deity. Siva is the creator, destroyer and preserver and their protector. The Hindu temple complex is framed by its namesake mountains. My means beautiful and Son means mountain (pronounced Me Sun). The Cham people were indeed inspired by nature as they constructed the temple grounds by precisely placing monuments strategically in a two-kilometer wide semi-circle in accordance to where the Sun would shine, starting behind the head of Lord Vishnu in the early morning. Before entering the temples, Hindu monks would cleanse their hands and feet with water that flowed over the Linga and Yoni. Cham Kings were not allowed to enter the Hindu temple as they



My Son Temple ruins



Siva Statue from My Son Temple in Viet

temples in Vietnam, and they offer their prayers and religious festivals are held at the time as well. One of the festivals is for rain, damp building festival, rianuga and then the abstinence ceremony where the fisherman pray for the safe journey in the sea.

7. Po Shanu Cham Towers

The Po Shanu Cham Towers are located atop Ong Hoang (Mr Heaven) Hill,



Poshainu Cham-Towers Mui Ne

come. They would have to sit for three days in the waiting rooms at My Son and practice deep meditation while the Hindu monks prayed for the Champa Kingdom from within the temple.

6. Poshainu Cham Towers, Mui Ne

This temple is located near the Phan Thiet City and these towers were built in honour of Lord Siva. The main tower has the height of 15 metres and has many lingams and other towers are between 5 and 12 metres. Each year the Cham people visit this which is one of the oldest Hindu

comprising three ancient worship towers built during the late 8th century. Together with Po Dam Towers and My Son Sanctuary, these ruins are regarded as important cultural landmarks of the ancient Champa Kingdom. Located 7 kilometers northeast of Phan Thiet City, the Po Shanu Towers were built to honour Hindu deities, Lord Siva, Agni and Nandi. Every year, the ethnic Cham community visits the ruins for religious festivals, such prayer for Rain, Rija Nuga, Damp Building Festival, and Abstinence Ceremony while local fishermen pray for safe journeys before they head out to sea every morning.



DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION

Durham Tamils Association Serving Our Community



DTA SERVING DURHAM TAMILS DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED AND CHALLENGING TIMES

Durham Tamils Association is always looking for ways to help our members, youth, and our seniors. During this pandemic period and this winter, we are continuing to provide free virtual activities almost every day. Thank you to our fantastic volunteers who do not expect anything and are serving the community voluntarily. DTA is truly grateful for your continued support. Also, DTA's Tamil school continues to provide virtual Tamil classes for our students.

Tamil Heritage Month & Pongal Vizha 2021

Tamil Canadians celebrate Tamil Heritage each January to recognize the contributions that Tamil-Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Tamil language and culture, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Tamil heritage for future generations.

Durham Tamil Association celebrated Heritage Month with special programs in January every year

Everyone wore their traditional clothes and expressed their Tamil spirit. We may be physically apart from each other, but nothing can stop us from being united as Tamils in celebrating our heritage. There were over 40 special programs including our annual Pongal vizha. From kids to our seniors, everyone participated in these special programs which was amazing to behold. DTA wants to thank all our volunteers who dedicated their time and effort to this program. DTA also wants to thank Mrs. Norin Francis, Mr. Mano Pancharatnam, Mr. Hanthan Manickavasagar, and Ms. Sveta Manorathan.

"We shall establish deep roots wher-

ever we live and overcome challenges by being a resilient and resolute community. We shall embrace the rich diversity in our societies and will work to foster and protect Tamil identity. Together, we will rise as proud Tamils around the world and will work to foster and protect Tamil identity."

DTA's Seniors

DTA is keeping our seniors fully occupied with multiple free virtual classes and programs. DTA runs Seniors Chair Yoga Class, Mind Exercises, Mat Yoga Class, Cooking Classes, Health Seminars, Chess Club, Virtual Game Nights, Travel Around the World from Armchair, Crafting Classes (including free craft items), and much more for our seniors. DTA is here to support you in any way.

If you want to participate in our programs, please check our monthly calendars. Please register for virtual Seniors programs at www.durham-tamils.org

Thank you to DTA's Annual Sponsors

DTA thanks our annual sponsors Nava Wilson Law, Computek, TSN Express, Chapel Ridge Funeral Home, Showtha Thushijanthan-RE/MAX, Ajax Crematorium, and Visitation Ctr, Threat IQ, Elankeeran-DF Credit Solutions, and all our sponsors for your continued support throughout the year.

For more information on all DTA's Community Support Programs and Sponsor contacts please visit www.DurhamTamils.Org

Tel: 905.428.7007

DTA News Channel on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIQinT8OO0o>



COMMUNITY WATCH



Durham Tamils Association Serving Our Community



DTA SERVING DURHAM TAMILS DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED AND CHALLENGING TIMES





A GREAT SIGH OF RELIEF

C. Kamalaharan

Murthy was always in a pensive mood since he was tactfully lured and settled in Canada a year ago. As it was the peak of the winter season he was wrapped up in warm clothing and remained in lockdown while the external world continued to remain shutdown. Sedentary life without proper exercise and the unpalatable fast food made his stomach and buttocks bulge. Life was so miserable that he craved for the carefree and simple living in his ancestral home. The mere mention of it was instantly turned down by the stern look from his son Ravi. Under the strict control of his son Murthy submissively settled down and spent the time in baby sitting and looking after the other mischievous grand kids under strict orders not to threaten or hurt them. He also engages himself in menial work according to his age and ability.

Unable to tolerate any more the severe weather and the monotonous life one evening Murthy plucked up courage and said, "I want to go to my ancestral home." "Why do you want to go there?" yelled the son. "We are providing everything for you why the sudden urge to go there," asked the daughter-in-law entering the fray. "My BP has shot up and my sugar level too has risen due to lack of physical exercise. Life is boring as I am a virtual prisoner here." "Here medical facilities are exceptionally good and they are free too. Your BP and sugar levels can be brought down within a couple of days," said Ravi. Continuing he said, "Look here the situation is such you have to adapt yourself to the weather conditions and stay here. Don't come to me with impracticable demands, understand!" spoke Ravi in a severe tone and left. Not able to convince his son Murthy retreated to his room fell flat on bed and spent the rest of the day brooding in solitude.

A couple of days later Murthy's friend Nathan arrived and inquired, "Where is Murthy Annai?" "There he is in his room as a recluse, replied his son" "Why is he not well?" "He is O.K but the only problem with him is that he daily bothers me to pack him to his ancestral home. I am totally against it." "Poor chap what can he do other than idling here in this biting cold," replied Nathan. "What are you talking, how can he travel when the whole world is at standstill with all flights cancelled due to the corona virus (COVID-19). Let him wait till the



situation returns normal." "Till such time this poor man has to wait!" "He has to," said Ravi. Continuing further he said, "Corona virus is spreading fast all over even in our ancestral home. Apart from that continuous rain is causing extensive damages there. Our village is completely marooned and the people are facing severe hardship. So he has to wait till normalcy returns." "OK till then why not admit him to one of the old age homes. You can drop him there on your way to work and pick him during your return trip. Old age homes are a boon to all elderly people. The homes are well managed and the inmates are being taken good care of. To spend the time beneficially news papers magazines story books and computers are available. They have also formed an association which meets once a month and on special occasions for a get together." "That sounds nice," replied Ravi. "I'll consider that and do the needful."

The hall was fully packed with members and well wishers to witness the annual day celebrations of the old age home. Among the special invitees were Mr. & Mrs. Murthy and Mr. Nathan seated in the front row opposite the stage. When the curtain was raised Murthy was delighted to see his dad standing in front of the microphone singing the 'Kadavul Vazhthu' (Prayer to God). With palms pressed together and eyes closed he rendered the prayer with full devotion. Following this the entertaining programmes in which Murthy enthusiastically participated won the applause of the audience.

"Your dad is outstanding not only in today's programme but also in all the activities of our day care centre. As an experienced retired teacher he entertains everyone with puns jokes and humorous episodes. Everyone likes him and he is a great asset to our centre." said the supervisor of the cen-

tre. Ravi was extremely happy to hear that.

A couple of weeks later Ravi received a telephone call from his cousin in their ancestral home mentioning that a suitable vaccine has arrived and that vaccination will commence soon. Pleased with the message Ravi decided to send his dad to their ancestral home where he could spend his sunset years happily with his erstwhile friends in his familiar surroundings. Thanking his cousin Ravi sent a reply, "I'll make arrangements to send Appa to you, take care." Two weeks later his cousin replied, "Don't be in a hurry Ravi the recent rains have caused extensive damages and all the wells are overflowing causing widespread water borne diseases. People are advised by health authorities to drink only boiled cooled water. Furthermore the corona virus too is fast spreading. Wait till things settle down and conditions become favourable for travelling."

Over hearing his son's telephone conversation Murthy said, "Thamby I do not want to return to our ancestral home and face difficulties. I am happy here particularly after being admitted to the old age home. I spend my time there wisely: reading books magazines and newspapers besides taking part in indoor games like carom scrabble and jigsaw puzzles. During weekends box office hit old Tamil movies are screened. Furthermore once a year the inmates are taken on an outing to various places within and outside the country. This is a boon to me as I like travelling. This year they are taking us to Disney Land in California." Pleased to hear all what his father had excitedly mentioned Ravi said, "OK Dad I am happy to hear that you are enjoying your stay here and that you wish to continue. Do as you please," saying so he heaved a sigh of relief and left the room.....

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