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Black History Month

Thu, Feb 1, 2024 – Thu, Feb 29, 2024

Every February, people across Canada participate in Black History Month events and festivities that honour the legacy of Black people in Canada and their communities. The 2024 theme for Black History Month is: “Black Excellence: A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build”.

In 2016, it was announced Viola Desmond would be the first Canadian woman to be featured by herself on the \$10 first vertical banknote (other notes feature groups of notable historical figures

or the Queen). The note features an excerpt from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, stating that “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.” The note entered circulation on November 19, 2018. Just a note – Could you put as thick Note on its own There Are Plenty of Ways to Celebrate Black History Month. Honor and celebrate Black history this February by supporting Black businesses, educating yourself on Black history and more.

New York venue to host T20 World Cup matches unveiled

34,000-seat Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, set to host India-Pakistan clash among eight T20 World Cup matches, announced. The construction of a new modular stadium, Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York, a first of its kind for cricket, is underway and is expected to be completed within a mere three months.

The 34,000-seat stadium is scheduled to host eight matches at the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2024, including the high-profile fixture between India and Pakistan on 9 June.

The stadium will feature an array of seating options including premium and general admission, VIP and hospitality suites, as well as a unique party deck and cabanas.

Sustainability is at the forefront of this project. The grandstands, previously used for the Formula 1 Las Vegas Grand Prix, are being repurposed for the T20 World Cup venue.

The design team behind this ambitious project is Populous, renowned for creating some of the most iconic stadia worldwide,

including the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad and the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London.

In New York, they are the architect of record for both the New York Yankees and New York Mets. “We are excited to be unveiling the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York ahead of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2024,” ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said.

It is an incredibly important milestone in the lead up to the biggest ICC event ever, with work commencing on the stadium which will be able to accommodate 34,000 cricket fans.”

“We are partnering with world-class

suppliers to deliver the modular stadium to ensure that players and fans can enjoy an unforgettable experience across the eight matches in New York in June this year.”

The stadium will not only cater to cricket enthusiasts but also promises a world-class experience for all guests. It will feature a dedicated fan zone, a variety of food and beverage outlets, and state-of-the-art media and broadcast areas.

The wicket, a drop-in square similar to those used at Adelaide Oval and Eden Park, is currently being curated in Florida. It will be transported to New York in early May.

The venue, 30 miles east of Manhattan, will have good transport and parking facilities, with three train stations also available in the vicinity. Fans will have their opportunity to be a part of history by attending a festival of cricket and seeing the world’s best players in action, with eight T20 World Cup matches hosted at the venue, beginning with the clash between Sri Lanka and South Africa on 3 June.

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Meet Dr. Mayoorendra Ravichandiran, ER Physician at Scarborough Health Network and new face of the Love, Scarborough campaign

Dr. Mayoorendra Ravichandiran, an Emergency Physician at Scarborough Health Network (SHN), was born in Sri Lanka and moved to Scarborough with his family when he was seven.

"I've had first-hand experience with some of the inequities that exist in Scarborough, and that's why I chose to dedicate my life to caring for my community as an Emergency Physician at SHN," says Dr. Ravichandiran. "As a recipient of the Poster Hero Awards by the CMC for my work as an ER MD during the pandemic, I have always advocated for access to better healthcare for Scarborough."

Dr. Ravichandiran loves Scarborough because of the diversity.

"There's such a large Tamil community here, and I think it's important to have that representation in the immigrant community," continues Dr. Ravichandiran. "Growing up in Sri Lanka, both of my parents were meteorologists. When we arrived in Canada, my parents returned to school to learn computer programming, all while raising three kids. Coming from a place of war, with so many obstacles, my mom taught us the value of hard work and perseverance. Working your way up despite adversity represents a lot of people's stories in Scarborough, including mine. And that's what having Scarborough Grit means to me."

Dr. Ravichandiran's brother is an orthopaedic surgeon in Ajax, and his sister is a family physician at SHN. They share a passion for caring for others and contributing to their communities, which would not have been possible without their mother's resilience.

"My hope for the future of healthcare in Scarborough is accessible care for everyone. To have the same level of accessibility for all

Despite the challenges faced by our Scarborough hospitals, like being left behind for decades and having aging hospitals, Dr. Ravichandiran and his colleagues keep the bar high when it comes to helping patients.

"I feel the biggest challenge is knowing we can do more," he says. "All of us come into work to provide the best care we can despite the limitations and challenges. However, I know that with more resources and support, we can do a lot more for the community."

Dr. Ravichandiran is part of the second chapter of SHN's Love, Scarborough campaign – a fundraising campaign that seeks to raise \$200 million for SHN's three Scarborough hospitals. This second chapter focuses on Scarborough's grit and determination and the notion that here in Scarborough, we do more than anyone thought possible with less than anyone could imagine. And now, SHN is asking donors to imagine what they could do with more.

"The best way to help SHN is by supporting the Love, Scarborough campaign in whatever way you can," continues Dr. Ravichandiran. "Your donations and support directly support me and my colleagues and will help upgrade our hospitals to care for our community long into the future."



Canadians, including new immigrants and people who don't have the best understanding of our healthcare system," says Dr. Ravichandiran.

Learn more or donate at LoveScarborough.ca.

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Finding Inspiration at The Movies

By Harrish Thirukumaran

When we go to the movies, there always seems to be this feeling within us of wanting to get up and do something with ourselves. The strings of our emotions are often tugged on by the progression of a plot or the motivations of the characters that feels relatable to us. In other words, movies have this power to leave us feeling inspired. Inspiration means the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative (Dictionary. com).

Here is a list of quotes pulled from movies that I have watched over the past few months, and how it has served as a form of inspiration for me. Hopefully, it ignites that same fire in you and your life endeavours.

The Equalizer 3:

Dr. Enzo Arisio: “Remember what I asked you.

Robert McCall: When I first come? Yeah.

Yeah, Yeah, you asked am I a good man or bad man?

Dr. Enzo Arisio: And you said you didn't know.

Robert McCall: I don't know.

Dr. Enzo Arisio: Only a good man would have say that.”

Despite it purely being an action thriller flick, this conversation between Dr. Enzo Arisio and Robert McCall somehow stuck with me as being particularly powerful. In my view, it demonstrates how we often aren't sure whether what we do with ourselves, including our actions and intentions, helps ourselves or others around us. We try to learn and reflect on the many experiences that life can throw at us to grow as people and find peace in our journey.

The Boy and the Heron:

Grey Heron: “Forgetting is normal.”

This is uttered by the Grey Heron towards the end of the film to Mahito after they return to the normal world in this 2023

animated feature film. To me, this signifies how it's best not to hold onto our memories too closely, especially the bad ones, such as grief. Mahito goes through this in the film after losing his mother in a hospital bombing. I feel as though it goes to show there is a reason that we hear time heals all wounds. Whether we like it or not, it grants us the kindness to continue to move on and experience the many wonders and mysteries of life in a more positive way.

Migration:

Gwen: “A father who knows it's important for his kids to see other parts of the world! Mack, I don't want to miss out on life because you're afraid to leave this pond. This isn't about migration. It's about... adventure, seeing what else life has to offer.”

At the beginning of this animated movie about birds, Gwen justifies the importance of travel to Mack, who is reluctant about sending his kids out in harm's way. This, and the title of the movie itself, relates to the story of immigrants. Moving across countries to start a new life in a different place can be scary, but equally exciting as an adventure. Additionally, for those trying something new, it's important to treat everything as an adventure on its own, no matter how small. It's an outlook that can help in learning to manage both the scary and fun parts along the way.

Mahaan:

Mahaan: “Being alone is not always happy. Especially as you get older, it's frustrating.”

A Tamil film about gangsters released in 2022, Vikram's character's, Gandhi Mahaan, states this line to one of his fellow gangsters after hearing he was divorcing his wife. Being alone does have its perks like satisfying your wants and desires very easily. Also, it allows you to accomplish things on your own to give that sense of peace. However, it eventually wears you out, and you realize how your relationships

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keep you grounded and safe. It also shows how we tend to take our relationships for granted. We often are not conscious of the need for a healthy dependency on others to get things done and feel at ease.

Hi Nanna:

Yashna: “Why do you love her even after she left you?

Viraj: All I did was describe her...this is called love?

Yashna: No. This is love.”

Dubbed in Tamil, Hi Nanna was an emotionally powerful movie released in 2023 in the Telegu language originally. Upon rewatching the ocean scene between Viraj and Yashna a couple of times because of its impact on me, it shows that memories can enrich us as people and our experiences. Despite the trauma his character felt,

he recounts the goodness within the romantic relationship he had with Yashna, who now suffers from amnesia. Being vulnerable in a situation like this can be very scary, but, at the same time, it allows us to feel the purity of love and life.

Overall, these movies were captivating in their own unique ways as a moviegoer. The messages they portray grandly left me feeling inspired based on the current circumstances in my life. To keep doing something knowing that I put in 100% of the effort. Movies play an influential role in our lives by giving us storytelling abilities of ourselves to continue finding the light of inspiration. It comes and goes, and it's important to allow ourselves to regain inspiration through various unique sources as we navigate life.

Canada to stage 13 games at 2026 FIFA World Cup between Toronto and Vancouver

B.C. Place in Vancouver to host 7 games; 6 games to be played at Toronto's BMO Field

FIFA partially fleshed out the road map for the 2026 World Cup on Sunday, revealing Canada and Mexico will each host 13 games with the U.S. staging the remaining 78.

With 45 countries yet to qualify for the men's soccer showcase, the full picture won't emerge until the tournament draw in early December 2025. But Sunday's televised reveal attached cities to dates as well as concrete information on the three co-hosts' schedule during the opening group phase. Mexico, currently ranked 15th in the world, will kick off

the expanded 48-team tournament on June 11 at Mexico City's Azteca Stadium, with a second game later that day in Guadalajara.

No. 48 Canada will open at Toronto's BMO Field on June 12.

The 12th-ranked Americans start their campaign the same day at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif.

Canada will stage 10 opening-round games — split evenly between Toronto and Vancouver, which will host Canada's two other opening-round matches June 18 and 24 at B.C. Place Stadium.

"We've had a lot of success in that stadium, especially in World Cup qualifying," interim Canada coach Mauro Biello said of BMO Field.

Biello said he was looking forward to the "energy" of B.C. Place.



Cup win, however, after losing all three matches in both 1986 in Mexico and in 2022 in Qatar.

The tournament quarterfinals are set for Boston, Kansas City, Los Angeles and Miami with the semifinals in Atlanta and Dallas.

The championship game is scheduled for July 19 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. with the bronze-medal match at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla.

The 2026 tournament was initially planned for 80 games, with the U.S. expected to host 60 and Canada and Mexico getting 10 apiece. The group phase was subsequently enlarged, adding an additional 24 games.

There are 16 host cities — two in Canada, three in Mexico and the rest in the U.S. AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, will host the most with nine.

The televised reveal, streamed around the world by FIFA, was co-hosted by actor Kevin Hart also included a cameo by Drake, in conversation with Infantino.

While the Toronto rapper is known more for his love of hoops than the beautiful game, he has connections with the Canadian men's team and has hung out with them when they are in town. During the schedule reveal show, Drake talked up Canada's and Toronto's multicultural population, calling the World Cup a "beautiful time" in the city.

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian and her son Saint helped announce the U.S. opening fixture.

Mexico will become the first country to stage the FIFA men's World Cup for a third time after hosting in 1970 and 1986. The U.S. hosted the 1994 tournament.

Canada has never hosted the men's World Cup although it tried to get the 1986 edition after Colombia, the original choice, said it could not stage

the tournament for financial reasons. Canada, the U.S. and Mexico all submitted bids to be the replacement host with Mexico eventually being chosen by FIFA, much to the ire of Canada and the U.S.

Canada hosted the 2015 Women's World Cup, as well as other age-group world championships.

World Cup qualifying has already started in CONMEBOL (South America), the AFC (Asia) and CAF (Africa).

CONCACAF, which covers North and Central America and the Caribbean, kicks off qualifying next month while the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) begins in September. UEFA (Europe) starts in March 2025.

CONCACAF could send as many as eight teams to the expanded World Cup. Three teams will join the tournament co-hosts via regional qualifying with two more bidding to join them via intercontinental playoffs.

FIFA awarded the 2026 hosting rights to the three co-hosts on June 13, 2018, at a meeting of the FIFA Congress in Mexico. The so-called united bid received 134 of 200 votes case (67 per cent) while Morocco got 65 votes (33 per cent) with one member association voting not to choose either bid.

2026 World Cup games in Canada

Toronto, BMO Field:
Group Stage: June 12 (Canada's first group game), 17, 20, 23 and 26.
Round of 32: July 2.

Vancouver, B.C. Place Stadium:
Group stage: June 13, 18 (Canada's second group game), 21, 24 (Canada's third group game) and 26.
Round of 32: July 2.
Round of 16: July 7.

Immigrants Leaving Canada Within Years of Arriving, Government Data Shows



Immigrants leaving Canada within a few years of arriving has been an ongoing phenomenon in the country's immigration system, according to a report from Statistics Canada. Over 15 percent of immigrants move away from Canada within 20 years of arriving, a Feb. 2 report says. Most leave the country between three and seven years.

"Immigrant emigration is particularly high a few years after admission and tends to decrease thereafter," StatCan said in the report. "This period may reflect the length of time that immigrants try to integrate into Canada by attempting to find a job and a place to live and adapting to life in Canada," a note on the government website says.

StatCan added that some immigrants intended to leave from the outset.

Using data from the Longitudinal Immigration Database, which includes information from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, taxation data from the Canada Revenue Agency, and the date of death from the Canadian Mortality Database, the report looks at decades worth of statistics and research.

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Stouffville Tamils Celebrates Tamil Heritage Month Celebrations

Stouffville Multicultural Association celebrated 11th annual Tamil Heritage in Stouffville at a grand scale. The event was held at the Stouffville District Secondary School on January 26 and attended by over 600 people including members from the Regional District School Board, Stouffville District Secondary School, Stouffville

Chamber of Commerce, Markham Stouffville Hospital, York Regional Police, Stouffville Fire Department. In addition, Markham – Stouffville MPP and Minister Paul Calandra, Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt, Stouffville Councilors Rick Upton, Markham Councilors Juanita Nathan grace the occasion. The event started with lighting

of traditional lamp, followed by Tamil Thai Vazthu and Nation anther, and included variety of dance, music and speeches which were showcased by Tamil youth. Mr. Sivan Ilanko, President of the organization welcomed the audience and Ms. Pooja Thevathas and Ms. Visobi Vimalanathan emceed the event.



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15th World Tamil Teachers' Conference, Toronto, Canada

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Objectives of the conference

- * To examine new pedagogies and ideas for the teaching and learning of Tamil language
- * To identify pedagogy for teaching learners of Tamil as a second language.
- * To explore new ideas on how to incorporate and leverage information, communication, and technological tools in the teaching of Tamil language.
- * To discover teaching and learning methods for speaking fluency.
- * To understand the importance of learning the Tamil language and finding the ways to do so.
- * To create networking opportunities among the international community of Tamil language teachers.
- * To actively promote the institutions teaching/wanting to teach Tamil language.



Research Papers

Research papers should be relevant to the theme of the conference. Delegates are invited to submit research papers on the following topics.

15th World Tamil Teachers' Conference

Research Paper Titles

- * Using linguistics to learn and teach the Tamil language.
- * Methods of teaching for students learning Tamil as a second language.
- * Using elements based on heritage, culture and the arts for the teaching and learning of Tamil language.
- * Teaching the pronunciation of the Tamil language in a unified manner.
- * Easy techniques to avoid spelling mistakes.
- * Simple methods to read.
- * Creating & teaching Tamil words using the syllabic method and its benefits.
- * The consequences of teaching Tamil with the aid of foreign languages.
- * Tamil language learning and teaching resources based on content relevant to contemporary issues.
- * Leveraging information and communication technology for teaching the Tamil language.
- * Papers that are written on another topic in relevance to the theme of the conference.

Papers

- * Research papers must be based on data derived from academic or class room-based research.
- * The conclusion of the research papers must contain recommendations for improving the teaching and learning of Tamil language.
- * Papers which include empirical evidence based on research conducted on current students, together with video recording are welcome.
- * The papers should be a guide to face the challenges and difficulties encountered when teaching.
- * Papers which include demonstrative aspects may be submitted.

Synopsis of research papers

- * Research paper synopses should be within 100 - 150 words (UNICODE encoding)
- * Important details such as your full name, email and phone number should be indicated.

Full versions of the selected research papers must be submitted by 3rd March 2024 to the organizers.

Total time allotted for each research paper	30 Mins
Introduction of the presenter	5 Mins
Presentation of paper	15 Mins
Q & A session	10 Mins

To register for the World Tamil Teachers Conference, kindly visit our website padimuraitamil.com and complete the online registration form.

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SCAN TO FILL



Tamil actor Vijay announces entry into politics through new party Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam



Tamil superstar Vijay officially entered politics, revealing his new party, Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam. Despite earlier speculation of a BJP alliance, Vijay had not confirmed political aspirations. With a massive fan base, political analysts anticipate a strong emergence, potentially aligning with the BJP. Tamil Nadu has a history of actors in politics, including MGR, Karunanidhi, Jayalalithaa, and current leaders like MK Stalin and Kamal Haasan.

Vijay will contest 2026 Assembly Elections in Tamil Nadu, when the current term of MK Stalin-led DMK party ends. The Tamil movie superstar is fondly called by his fans as Thalapathy, meaning General or Commander.

The actor made the decision public through a post on social media platform X. The name Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam loosely translates to “Tamil Nadu Victory Party”. The party’s flag, symbol and other plans

will be revealed after recognition from the Election Commission.

“I have decided to complete the film I have already committed to, without affecting the party work and completely involve myself in the politics of public service. I consider this as my gratitude towards the people of Tamil Nadu,” Vijay said.

Vijay, 49, said that his party, as decided in its recent General Council and Executive Council meetings, will refrain from participating in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and will not extend support to any other candidates either.

Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, social media was rife with rumours of the Bharatiya Janata Party tying up with the superstar to make inroads into the state of Tamil Nadu. However, the actor never officially commented on his intentions to participate in politics.

“People of Tamil Nadu are yearning

for a political movement that would pave the way for a selfless, transparent, visionary and efficient administration that is free of corruption, and caste and religious differences,” he said.

Political analyst and Director, Centre for Policy and Development Studies, C Rajeev told IANS, “Vijay has the top fan base in Tamil Nadu, just a little below Rajinikanth and in the days to come with his political party, he will emerge stronger. The BJP is likely to align itself with Vijay and this would be a formidable combination for the BJP to win in Tamil Nadu.”

The state of Tamil Nadu is no stranger to actors and actresses joining mainstream politics. Former Chief Ministers MG Ramachandran (MGR), Kalaingar Karunanidhi, and Dr J Jayalalithaa, hailed from the Tamil film industry. While MGR and Jayalalithaa shot to fame as actors, Karunanidhi gained significant success as a prolific scriptwriter.

Current chief minister MK Stalin, son of Karunanidhi, acted in three movies and in a popular television serial. Stalin’s son Udhayanidhi Stalin is the current Minister for Sport Development and Youth Welfare in the state. He too was prominent actor in Tamil Nadu.

Renowned actor Kamal Haasan too runs a political party, known as Makkal Needhi Maiaam.

Deepfake Scam Video Cost Company \$26 Million, Hong Kong Police Says

Scammers tricked a multinational firm out of some \$26 million by impersonating senior executives using deepfake technology, Hong Kong police said Sunday, in one of the first cases of its kind in the city.

Law enforcement agencies are scrambling to keep up with generative artificial intelligence, which experts say holds potential for disinformation and misuse — such as deepfake images showing people mouthing things they never said.

A company employee in the Chinese finance hub received “video conference calls from someone posing as senior officers of the company requesting to transfer money to designated bank accounts,” police told AFP.

Police received a report of the incident on January 29, at which point some

HK\$200 million (\$26 million) had already been lost via 15 transfers.

“Investigations are still ongoing and no arrest has been made so far,” police said, without disclosing the company’s name.

The victim was working in the finance department, and the scammers pretended to be the firm’s U.K.-based chief financial officer, according to Hong Kong media reports.

Acting Senior Superintendent Baron Chan said the video conference call involved multiple participants, but all except the victim were impersonated.



A man talks on his phone against the backdrop of the skyline in Hong Kong, Oct. 19, 2022

“Scammers found publicly available video and audio of the impersonation targets via YouTube, then used deepfake technology to emulate their voices... to lure the victim to follow their instructions,” Chan told reporters.

The deepfake videos were pre-recorded and did not involve dialogue or interaction with the victim, he added.



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SPECIAL FEATURE

The Smartphone and its Antidotes

By: J A Rajah



- inews.co.uk

A. Nomophobia :

Modern-day youths and even kids have developed an addiction to smartphones. The endless parades of new images, notifications, and updates through smartphones can consume huge proportions of our lives. One could see adults glued to their smartphones almost all the time depriving them of human fellowship and direct communication. It almost deprives them of close friendships and sharing their feelings with friends and relatives. They are inhabited in such a manner that they feel irritated and agitated when separated from their smartphones. It is a kind of nomophobia. You have indeed become slaves to this powerful technology.

B. Reading-the hallmark of an Educated Society :

The only solution to the problem is to cultivate the habit of reading. We should not forget the adage. 'Reading maketh a man'. Reading was once considered the hallmark of a free and educated society. However, with the development of IT and new technology reading has been on the decline. If one goes to a Toronto public library, one could observe that many members will be at the computers and the number of people borrowing books is decreasing.

C. The Electronic Media :

The internet and electronic media have blossomed into a novel way of expressing ideas. Whatever the benefits of the newer electronic media, they provide no measurable substitute for intellectual and personal development. If people neglect the habit of reading, they will suffer substantial, economic, social, and civic setbacks. Reading can reduce stress, prepare us for restful sleep help battle depression, and strengthen our brains. Research reveals reading for at least six minutes can reduce stress by 68 percent. Reading books can help us regain balance and tranquility in our minds.

D. The Decline in the Habit of Reading :

Education is about developing a thirst for truth and learning from history to successfully face the challenges of the future. As reading declines, is it any wonder the world is confused about basic science and biology? The proliferation of digital distractions is one of the biggest factors in the decline of reading. People can now occupy their free time with mindless reading of frequent notifications with the help of phones, tablets, social media, and streamlined services. They cut short their time by looking into the pages of a book. Even pastors look into their iPhones to get at their bible quotations.

Is it shocking that many cannot reason and discriminate between truth and fake news?

E. Reading is vital for Life :

We can't change the whole world, but we can help our children see the value of making books part of their lives. Put books within the easy reach of your couch or recliner. Create a warm and comfortable ambiance with strategically placed lamps for good lighting. If you have small children read with them. It is good for their brains, and the connections you create are priceless. Do not let your tablet or phone be your child's babysitter. A child's brain needs more stimulation than other attractions that media provides. In the U S, research showed that toddlers spend more than two hours daily using digital media. Reading to your children creates strong bonds between you and them and it is good for their long-term development and health. In all things being able to discern, good from bad is vital. Many love books because they are engagingly written and thrill educators and parents. Reading is foundational. It is vital for our health, our growth, and our future. It is crucial for training the next generation. The habit of reading books is vital for a better world.

“A smile is a curve
that sets everything straight.”

Phyllis Diller



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Dr. Adeel Sheikh treats benign prostatic hyperplasia (or enlarged prostate) at Markham Stouffville Hospital using the GreenLight laser.

Lighting the way

Markham Stouffville Hospital’s new GreenLight Laser is reducing hospital stays and wait times for prostate surgeries. **BY GLYNIS RATCLIFFE**

In a darkened operating room, Dr. Adeel Sheikh, a urologist at Oak Valley Health’s Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH), dons purple-tinted goggles, as do the rest of the medical professionals that surround him. Dr. Sheikh is handed a surgical instrument – a long, slim tube attached to a machine, which a nurse turns on – and it lights up neon green, casting the room in a futuristic glow.

It’s the first time Dr. Sheikh and his team are using the hospital’s new GreenLight Laser, and they’re about to make the life of Bradley Steele, a 59-year-old risk insurance specialist, a whole lot easier.

Like many men in their late 50s, by the time Steele realized that his prostate was the source of his discomfort, he was feeling the reverberations in all aspects of his life.

“You don’t notice it because it’s happening every day and ramping up very slowly,” he notes. “Then all of a sudden, you’re going, ‘Wait a second, I’m getting up every hour and a half to go to the bathroom! What’s going on here?’”

In some ways, it’s like the analogy of the frog in water: place a frog in a pot of water and slowly turn up the heat until it boils. The frog won’t realize anything is wrong until it’s too late.

FAR-REACHING EFFECTS

Steele was experiencing a very common condition in men (or people assigned male at birth) as they age – benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or enlarged prostate. The prostate encircles the urethra, but when it increases in size, it starts

to constrict the urethra, resulting in a long list of symptoms related to urination. These include decreased flow and an inability to completely empty the bladder, which often causes the person to feel an increased need to urinate, and in some cases, experience pain.

In Canada, more than 50 per cent of men in their 60s experience symptoms of BPH, and that increases to approximately 90 per cent for men in their 80s and 90s. Sometimes medication can control the condition, but when that doesn’t work, surgery is needed to hollow out the inner part of the prostate.

It may not seem like much, but that continual anticipation of needing to urinate can have a serious impact on a person’s quality of life. In Steele’s case, he was constantly anxious about whether he would be able to get to the bathroom in time, or disturbing people around him in theatres and on planes. But while the mental burden was significant, it was the physical impact that drove Steele to seek medical advice in the spring of 2023.

“I went to see my family doctor, and I said, ‘Look, I can’t handle this anymore. This is not a good life,’” he recounts. “I was up every 15 to 20 minutes some nights and tired all the time.”

Steele’s family doctor referred him to Dr. Sheikh at MSH, who specializes in minimally invasive surgery. Dr. Sheikh performed a quick consultation and told him he was a great candidate for surgery, and it just so

happened that the hospital had recently acquired a GreenLight Laser, funded with the generous support of the community through the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation. He asked Steele if he was willing to be one of the first patients, and he said yes.



Bradley Steele has a normal sleep routine again, thanks to surgery at Markham Stouffville Hospital.

CLEAR ADVANTAGES

The most common surgery for BPH is performed endoscopically through the urethra, during which the surgeon hollows out the prostate by shaving tissue away with a cautery

loop. It’s effective, but there’s a fair amount of bleeding, and patients need to stay in the hospital for a few days to recover.

In recent years, however, the GreenLight Laser has become the tool of choice because it enables surgeons to essentially vaporize prostate tissue instead, eliminating most of the bleeding. Even better, the surgery is now an outpatient procedure, allowing surgeons to discharge patients the same day and free up much-needed hospital beds.

“When you tell patients that they have to have surgery, their first question is, ‘How

long do I have to stay in hospital?’” notes Dr. Sheikh. “And to be able to say, ‘This is just a day procedure,’ it really puts their mind at ease and helps them accept the need for the surgery. And they’re quite satisfied afterwards, so it’s a very gratifying procedure.”

Dr. Sheikh estimates that about 70 to 80 per cent of BPH-related surgeries at MSH will be done with the GreenLight Laser moving forward, with endoscopic or open surgery used for other cases where a tissue biopsy is needed. The move will increase the hospital’s capacity to treat this common problem and subsequently reduce wait times. MSH’s Department of Surgery is approaching the task of increasing capacity and reducing wait times from multiple angles—opening a ninth operating room in 2024 and kicking off a fundraising campaign to acquire new surgical robotics equipment.

As for Steele, he can’t believe the difference this surgery made. He can sleep through the night and no longer worries about getting to a bathroom when he’s out.

“This has been a game changer for me,” he notes. “It’s the physical thing, but it’s also really eased some of that mental pressure as well—the anxiety and the potential embarrassment. Dr. Sheikh gave my life back to me.” ■

In 2023, Markham Stouffville Hospital’s surgical team received two prestigious awards from the American College of Surgeons.



Surgical Quality Partner Designation



National Surgical Quality Improvement Program



HEALTH & WELLNESS

TRILLIUM HEALTH PARTNERS TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN MISSISSAUGA AND WEST TORONTO

Integration will bring specialized staff, physicians and services together to deliver a new model of care for patients



Trillium
Health Partners

Building on the vision and plans for the province's first Women's and Children's Hospital at the future The Peter Gilgan Mississauga Hospital, Trillium Health Partners (THP) is advancing the integration of care for women and children in the community. Beginning in 2025, all Women's and Children's services, including labour and delivery, neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), and other gynecological and reproductive health services, will be provided at Credit Valley Hospital (CVH) until the new hospital is complete.

"This is an important step in realizing the full vision for our new Women's and Children's Hospital and strengthening our ability to deliver the highest quality patient care," stated THP President and CEO, Karli Farrow. "This plan will bring our highly specialized teams, resources, and services together in a single location, ensuring patients receive seamless, integrated care. The transition is a crucial step in supporting the future growth of our community and sets the stage for the new hospital."

In September 2023, THP and the Government of Ontario announced the Women's and Children's Hospital, which will be 200,000-square-foot and equipped with cutting-edge technology, designed to provide the highest standards of care in birthing and newborn health, children's health, and women's health. An important part of a comprehensive system of care, the Women's and Children's Hospital will be purpose-built for families, offering an array of highly specialized services, integrated care, and health system partnerships that will profoundly impact the generational health of the community, from conception through infancy and childhood, and, for women, through all phases of adulthood.

Currently, women's and children's care and services are being provided at both the Mississauga Hospital (MH) and CVH. Bringing these services together in one place will provide a more integrated care model for patients, their families, and THP staff. The full integration to CVH is planned for 2025. This change will offer a common experience for patients and families and enable teams to more effectively manage the increasing demand in the community. Renovations at CVH over the coming year will provide additional Birthing, NICU, and clinic space. The additional space has been designed in a way that will allow other programs to use it once the new Women's

and Children's Hospital is complete.

"Bringing together all our women's and children's services at one site will enable us to provide the highest quality of care to this patient population and create predictable, accessible health care services," explained Dr. K. Joan Murphy, Chief of Staff, THP. "In the purposefully designed, integrated space at CVH, our skilled and dedicated teams can work together more seamlessly, ensuring we deliver the highest standard of care with courage, compassion, and excellence."

Emergency departments at MH, as well as CVH, remain fully equipped and able to provide safe, accessible, high-quality care for women and children. If specialized care or admission is required after the integration is complete, the hospital's dedicated teams will work with the patient and their family to ensure they receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

"Ensuring the safety and well-being of women and children remains THP's top priority," said Dr. Ivan Cacic, Chief, Women's and Children's Health. "The emergency departments at all our sites, including Credit Valley and Mississauga, will be resourced to support women and children in emergencies, including emergency births."

THP is committed to communicating and engaging with our patients, providers and staff, community and partners as we advance our mission of building a new kind of health care for a healthier community. Existing patients with plans to deliver at the Mississauga Hospital this year can rest assured this is not an immediate change and their birth will proceed at their previously identified location. As the planning and transition to CVH moves forward, information will be available on THP's website and social media channels and shared with the hospital's staff and partners. THP will continue to maximize all available beds, and in partnership with clinical teams, THP will work to determine the most appropriate patient populations to utilize the beds vacated at the Mississauga Hospital as a result of this move.

For information on Trillium HealthWorks, the largest infrastructure renewal project in Canadian history, visit www.trilliumhealthworks.ca.

For information on the future plans for the Women's and Children's Hospital shared in the September 2023 announcement, read the press release [here](#).

WOMENS and CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUICK FACTS

- THP will continue to be able to deliver the most babies of any hospital in Canada, with 8,000+ deliveries each year.
- Over 4,200 women's surgeries performed annually.
- THP will continue to have access to up to 48 NICU bassinets to care for our highest need babies; the fourth highest neonatal capacity in Ontario.
- Over 36,000+ paediatric visits to the THP Emergency Departments.
- THP operates up to 35 paediatric beds, the most inpatient paediatric beds in Ontario, outside of the four specialty children's hospitals (Sick Kids, McMaster's Children's Hospital, Children's Hospital LHSC and CHEO).
- THP is home to the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario (POGO)'s Satellite Clinic, which allows kids with cancer to be treated closer to home.
- Select paediatric clinics will remain at or adjacent to the Mississauga Hospital, including the Family Care Centre and Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Services.

ABOUT TRILLIUM HEALTH PARTNERS (THP)

Trillium Health Partners (THP) is one of the largest community-based hospital systems in Canada. Comprised of Credit Valley Hospital, the Mississauga Hospital and the Queensway Health Centre, THP serves the growing and diverse populations of Mississauga, West Toronto, and surrounding communities. THP is a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto, is an associate member of the Toronto Academic Health Science Network and a proud member of Mississauga's Ontario Health Team. THP is committed to reducing inequities and improving health in the community. Visit www.trilliumhealthpartners.ca.



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ICON OF AMERICA'S BUSINESS PRIDE, PILLAR, AND MONEY SPINNER –THE BOEING COMPANY ???



Boeing is the Heart of American Business, you may say was a city within the city of Seattle, till it moved its headquarters from Chicago to Arlington County, Virginia. It has its own Boeing Airfield, Museum, Aeronautical school and offices stretching miles and miles. Boeing was the Gold Card, and Flag Ship of Americas Business. A Company even the American Presidents get involved to promote its Sales, as President Barack Obama was by the side of CEO Lion Air, when he signed with Boeing, to buy 737 MAX-8, worth so many billions. Obama used to brag, that he is the super salesman for Boeing, and may get a "Gold Watch" when his term ends. President Donald Trump said in 2017 in North Carolina, at the B787 factory, GOD bless America & God bless Boeing. There was so much closeness and coziness between US Government and Boeing, whether it was Republican or Democrat, an open secret.

Why did this empire Boeing lose its luster, in chaotic status and fall into a ravine so quickly. It's in the news every day with some issues, a company that has been in business for more than a century, is not known to anyone, except to Boeing. (At last, we know now). Bill Boeing, Timber Baron and Shipyard owner who minted money in his business, had a passion for flying, used his engineering degree to build a seaplane with his friend Wester Welt, called Model- B & W. This was the beginning of Boeing in 1900. Boeing was propelled by WW1, by its bombers B-17 and B-29, and this helped to end the war quickly. Boeing was described in US Tabloids as a company "Built to last", took much pride and acclaim from airlines for its sleek Aircraft model and engineering excellence. Boeing, is soul America's of aircraft industry. The defense contracts made Boeing flourish. After the war Boeing made civilian transport planes, DASH-80, precursor to B707 that was followed by B

747, nick named, Jumbo Jets for its size and the range it could fly, most popular version of 70s. In 1974 at Katunayake airport when I boarded Condor German Airlines B747, first to fly to Colombo, was awestruck by its beauty and the upper deck, a first for me in my aviation journey. Joe Sutter, the legendary chief engineer, star of Boeing of B747, said in 70s "safety culture of Boeing will be preserved always". Boeing management changes periodically eroded the safety structure. I may be wrong CEO; McNerney's tenure was the beginning for the safety erosion.

It was said that McNerney's phrase was "More for Less". As a CEO, they are all answerable to the Stockholders. In this culture, safety is almost at the bottom. In 2015 Dennis Muilenberg succeeded McNerney, and the safety culture took the back seat, as events unfolded in 2018, B 737 MAX-8, of Lion Air 610 crashed over Indonesian waters killing all on board. Dennis and his cohorts at Boeing did cast the blame on Indonesian pilots, "they did not know how to fly this aircraft" and sadly there were racial tones quoting "Pete Robison". The worst part was, Boeing maintained MAX was safe to fly. 5 months after, Ethiopian Air 302 crashed soon after taking off from Addis Ababa, killing all 157.

FAA was acting in slow mode for what was best known to them. The whole aviation industry got rattled by these 2 events and airlines and passengers started to have second thoughts, flying on Max. The news and the online media went into a frenzy and was feasting. China was the first country to ground MAX, followed by others including Canada. But FAA still did not ground any 737 officially and were still operating. The slow response from the internationally recognized policeman of aviation, "FAA" is still a concern for me. Were they waiting for more crashes to happen? or did not want to be in the bad books of Boeing, was anybody's guess. This forced one member of the congress during congressional hearing to label FAA, as a "Tombstone Agency" since it acts only, when death happens.



Boeing first model sea plane

This problem of safety with Boeing has been around for more than a decade according to many analysts and have read in many publications.

Boeing is concerned with making more aircraft at a faster rate than Airbus paying callous disregard for its safety. Boeing was outsourcing their parts to various companies to save money and to overcome labor unrest. It was said that some companies who were tasked had no engineering experience at all.

Boeing problems started as blisters and evolved into a Cancer.

Looks like Karma has caught up with Boeing for all the commissions, omissions, and manipulations. Was outsourcing, slipshod work, faster production of planes, cutting corners, and keeping safety, a hostage. May be the causes for the mess now? The answer is, money only. It promotes me to the next level



William Edward Boeing.

to say this, an injustice is committed to all the people, who take to sky every minute all over the world, as daily routine without ever realizing, what will happen to the planes they are flying in. Pilots always try to minimize their errors, but can any pilot overcome the manufacturer's fault? as in the case Indonesian

Lion Air, and Ethiopian airline Max crashes. Even the FAA was not aware of the software, Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS) that was installed in the 737 Max nor the pilots. Alarming, as it was omitted from the operations manual even. Why so much veil of secrecy? It is in black and white, some at Boeing even doubted the accuracy of MCAS which caused those two crashes, 5 months apart. These crashes brought the downfall of Denis Muilenberg, who was linked to this mess by his own e mails, and congressional leader's hearing in Capitol Hill.



I want the readers to know this too, was Boeing alone to be blamed for this? My answer is not, there is an associate who should take enough blame and heat for this mess. An Agency, FAA in US, who formulate most of the aviation safety laws, for the safe travel in the blue skies, abdicated its quality control responsibility, to be at the mercy of Boeing.

Was this also a factor? No second guessing. These and many other factors became an open secret, after the horrific MAX crashes. These events and the recent Alaska airlines MAX -9 issue, prompted Tim Clark, CEO, Emirates Airlines, and like-minded CEO from other airlines to proclaim "Boeing has real Safety Issues" in its fleet and production line.

AS an aviation buff, 52 years and counting, makes me sad, that a product that dominated the aerospace industry for more than a century, stands in front of the aviation fraternity, as a "convicted criminal for its own folly". Really preposterous. I was thinking how to sum it up, a high voltage bulb flashed through my mind. While working in Houston, always listened to a Reganite, Republican Radio talk show host, famous Sam Donaldson, said "America's Business Is Its Business". Another Reganite Economist, Milton Friedman, New York Times Magazine in 1970, "The Social responsibility of business is to increase profits".

I am sure these two statements sum up everything with Boeing. Will CEO, Dave Calhoun move away from this culture and show a better face to the World of aviation? Also, can he make Boeing "A Cash Cow" again for America? Billion Dollar Question?

K.N. Sivagnanasunderam (Blue)
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SPECIAL FEATURE

Words of Peace Quieting the Noise



You actually get to create your own internal playlist.

What do you want to hear?

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?

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?

MC- "The noise"—that chatter that is constantly there., "What's the best strategy for coping with it? How do we quieten it down, the noise?"

Prem Rawat:. 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 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 nice noise on is up to you. It truly is—because you're the one who is doing it: who's buying into this noise and keeps: "Ah, push play again, please." And, you know, and has it on "repeat," so it just keeps 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.

- Prem Rawat

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Starting the New Year at the FEET OF JESUS

By: J A Rajah

People from traditional religious families seek the help of God at the beginning of the year so that they can lead peaceful lives throughout the twelve months. They seek the help of Divinity for their security (**Lord-Save Me**). Human beings are always in fear of calamities and believe that dependence and worship of God will help them. Godly help will also enable them to lead pure lives (**Lord-Purify me**), unblemished by sins. Faith in God strengthens them physically. It will help them or guard them against dangerous ailments (**Lord-Guide me**)..

Devotees seek help for guidance in life’s difficult pathways. We are continually faced with various decisions to make. Wrong decisions may cause a lot of mental, emotional, and financial hazards. God’s guidance is essential for us to make the appropriate decisions. God’s blessings are needed to encourage us to lead positive lives (**Lord-Encourage me**).. When we are faced with tribulations, we need God’s strong hand to alleviate our fears and overcome them.

*“Thunpankal pallavai peruhi
Vanthalum,

Thoolakal emmai anuhi vanthalam,

Kaaka vallavar, kaaka vallavar, Kaaka
vallavar, kaaka vallavar”.*

God’s help is necessary for us to use us. (**Lord-Use me**) He will have to lead us in ways in which we can be useful to others. Pastor Benji Devadason testified that he opted to serve God at the age of 20 and now going into his 70th year the Lord is using him tremendously to spread His word. “What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer’. We are the hand of God to redeem humanity from the bondage of life’s calamities. Above all, we seek God’s help at the beginning of the year to request him to provide for Us. We are always at his mercy to fulfill all our wants. God provided Abraham with a lamb to be sacrificed in place of his son. God will always come to help us at the right time to enable us to lead victorious and successful lives. Let the New Year enable us to lead useful and purposeful lives with the help and provision of God.





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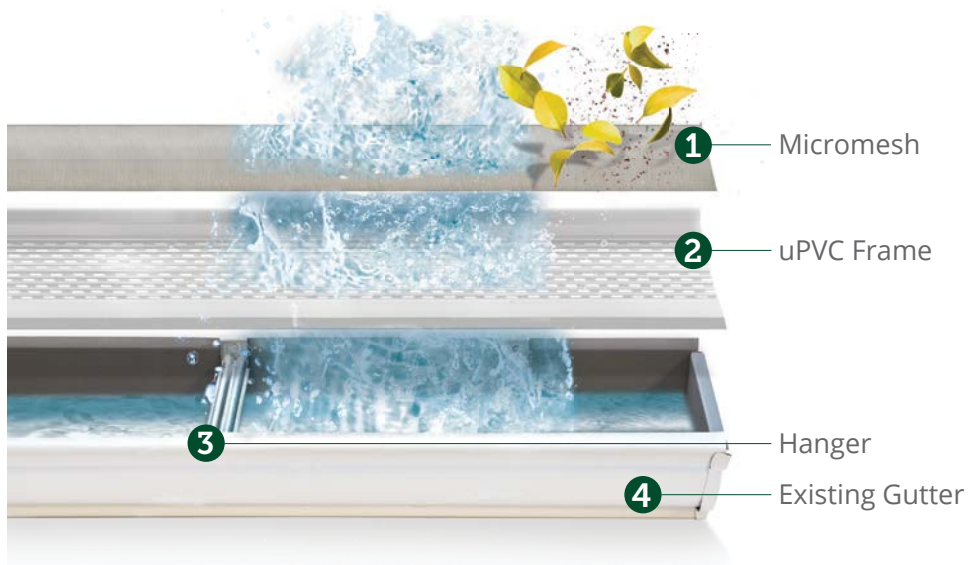
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Kurunthokai

As opposed to flame she is cool when near and hot when far

By: Kumar Punithavel

The word Kurunthokai in Tamil literally means collection of short ones, and it is a classical Tamil poetic literature of Sangam era, dated BC 300. It falls second in the Ettuthokai, meaning eight anthologies. The poems in this anthology fall into the category of aham meaning matters pertaining to emotions or personal relationships like love. These poems are short from four to eight lines except two of them have nine lines.

The poem number 95 Kurunthokai was authored by the poet Kapilar, who had composed 206 poems in Sangam literature. Interestingly another great saintly poet who is hailed as the lawgiver of the Tamil race and to the world, St. Thiruvalluvar, in his famed book Thirukkural, calls the lass as a wondrous fire of different nature, which cools when near and warms when she moves away, in his couplet 1104;

*Withdraw, it burns; approach, it soothes the pain;
Whence did the maid this wondrous fire obtain*

நீங்கின் தெறாஉம் குறுகுங்கால் தண்ணென்னும்
தீயாண்டுப் பெற்றாள் இவள்.

In the above couplet St. Thiruvalluvar portrays a woman as a different sort of fire, and goes on to say this fire performs opposite of what happens in the presence of normal fire. We all will agree that normally when one gets closer to the fire they will feel the warmth, and as he moves away it will progressively become cooler. St. Thiruvalluvar says as opposed to that notion when the lad moves away from the lass his heart will burn with desire, and as he gets closer, he will feel way cooler as his thirst of his heart is quenched.

Likewise, to this couplet from Thirukkural, in the poem Kurunthokai # 95, poet Kapilar observes that the lass makes our hero cooled down when he gets closer to her. The episode of this poem is composed as if a young hero voicing to his friend about his feelings of love. The whole event of this poem is comparing the effects of inanimate substance to human feelings and presence. Like inanimate fire bows down to the might of water, the burning emotions of a youth bows to the countenance of a young lass. The poet makes the clash between water and fire, to flash in front of our eyes. The episode took place in Kurunji terrain, meaning mountainous region. He starts by describing the terrain with the first line saying from a sky-high mountain cascades the clear white stream of water.

From Sky high mountain cascades the clear white brook,
மால் வரை இழிதரும் தூ வெள் அருவி

Next the poet describes the scenery of the mountain sides where the water flows on a creek causing echo in the crevices of the mountain, the rest of the mountain sides are overgrown with a variety of flower bushes giving a beautiful sight.

*Echoing in the rock crevices, mountain slopes with
variety of flowers*

கல் முகைத் ததும்பும் பன்மலர்ச் சாரல்



After describing the setting of the episode, the poet goes to describe the two characters of the event, by describing first a person from the tiny hamlet's comes a young lass, describing her as having broad shoulders. Interestingly in the modern age we may not much appreciate the beauty of broad shoulders, during the Sangam era, people appreciated the broad shoulder that carried the family, further it is the shoulder of the lass that holds him tight to her breast!

Resident of small hamlet, broad shouldered young lass

சிறுகுடிக் குறவன் பெருந்தோள் குறுமகள்

However, he goes on to describe the lass as having the countenance like water, meaning her beauty is gentle like water. Probably the bard had remembered the brooks flowing down the sides on the hill;

Water like grace,

நீர் ஓரன்ன சாயல்,

It is interesting to note that just after mentioning the countenance as though strong shouldered was also soft like water, which had quenched the lad's carnal thirst.

Quenches my fiery strength.

தீ ஓரன்ன என் உரன் அவித்தன்றே.

Here is the full poem both in English and Tamil;

*From Sky high mountain cascades the clear white brook,
Echoing in the rock crevices, mountain slopes with
variety of flowers*

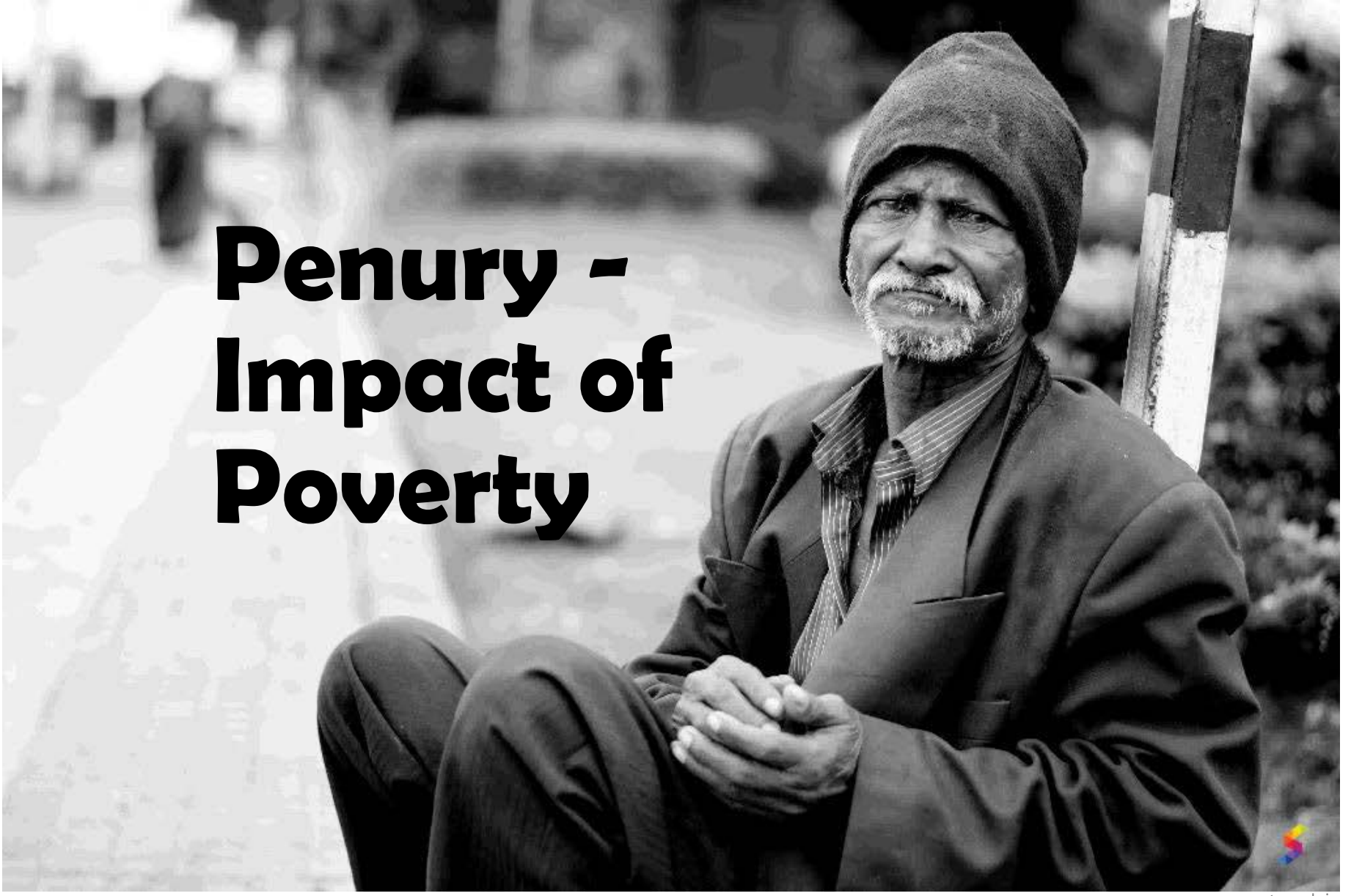
*Resident of small hamlet, broad shouldered young lass
Water like grace,*

Quenches my fiery strength5

மால் வரை இழிதரும் தூ வெள் அருவி
கல் முகைத் ததும்பும் பன்மலர்ச் சாரல்
சிறுகுடிக் குறவன் பெருந்தோள் குறுமகள்,
நீர் ஓரன்ன சாயல்,
தீ ஓரன்ன என் உரன் அவித்தன்றே.....5



SPECIAL FEATURE



- smartvocab.in

By: J A Rajah

If one wants to know what is more painful than poverty, the answer is that poverty alone qualifies for that position. The demon of poverty, when he overtakes one, the joys of his life and the next one are lost to him. The cravings arising from poverty will destroy one's ancestral honor, as well as all refinement of peace. Even men of noble lineage will descend to the sea of disgraceful speech if subjected to lassitude and frustrations of poverty. A nobleman will forget the standards required of him due to poverty.

**"Nalkrav ennm idmpaykkl, palkrath,
Thnpanal chenr padum"**

நல்குரவு என்னும் இடும்பையுள் பல்குரைத்
துன்பங்கள் சென்று படும்

Many other afflictions and sorrows come to one unbidden when one is stricken with abject poverty. Even good truths analyzed and presented skillfully by an indigent

person will get badly depreciated in their value. Poverty not associated with dharma or virtue will estrange one's mother and make her look like a stranger. The abject poverty that all but killed me yesterday, am I to face it again today"?...It is possible to go to sleep even amid flames, but it is impossible to sleep in extreme poverty.

**"Thpparavu illar thvarath truvaramai
Uppitkm kaadikkum kootu"**

துப்புர வில்லார் துவரத் துறவாமை
உப்பிற்கும் காடிக்கும் கூற்று

People of no resource will do well to renounce the world and become ascetics, or else they will have to depend on others for salt and gruel. Vllvar asserts that when people have nothing to live on, they should renounce the world completely and become ascetics.

(Kural: 1041-1050).



Valluvar's Views

Career workshop for High School Students



The Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada (ASGC) is conducting its annual Career Guidance Workshop for high school students and their parents on Saturday February 24th 2024. The workshop is conducted in partnership with York Region District School Board (YRDSB). All high school students Grades 9-12 in the York region and around the Greater Toronto Area are welcomed to attend this extremely beneficial event. It's free for all students and parents. This workshop will begin at 9:30 am with the registration. The plenary session will be at 10:00 am with a special feature presentation by a keynote speaker. Then students will be divided into four groups based on their interest. These groups are Health & Life Sciences, Applied Sciences, Creative Arts & Humanities and Business Studies & Entrepreneurship. While the students are attending their sessions, parents will have a separate session. In which parents will have the opportunity to take part in a panel discussion with university & college representatives, teachers, and councillors.

The workshop is a great opportunity for students to meet personally and openly discuss with young professionals who have recently graduated and successfully employed in their fields. ASGC has arranged more than 30 panelists for this event who have volunteered their precious time and energy to come and contribute to the community. They will be an inspiration to the students in their vision and guidance to select an appropriate course of studies and career.

The key note speaker at this workshop is Arun Theivendirarajah, former student of Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute (Governor-General Award winner) and a Computer Engineering graduate of Waterloo University. He now works for Meta (formerly Facebook) as Senior manager, Consumer Privacy Product Management.

This iconic event is organised by ASGC under the leadership of its president Mr. Nel Ketharanathan together with the dynamic and energetic executive committee members. This workshop is coordinated by Ms. Soundari Jeyendran (ASGC), Ms. Suganja Sinnathamby (YRDSB & ASGC) and Dr. V. Manivannan (ASGC). Please do not miss this wonderful opportunity, pass this information to all those who have

students studying in High Schools. Refreshments and light lunch will be provided. The registration details are provided on the attached flyer. Please encourage as many students and parents as possible to come and benefit from this workshop.

Dr. Kangasabai Theivendirarajah, Ph.D (London)
Former President & Executive Committee Member, ASGC



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GUIDANCE FOR HIGHER STUDIES



CAREER INFORMATION WORKSHOP
HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS (GR.9-12) & PARENT/GUARDIAN



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Time: 9:30am-2.00pm
Venue: Miliken Mills HS, Markham
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Admission: FREE
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- Scholarship & Grant Applications
- Secondary School Course Selections

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 **Nageswary Srikumaraguru:**
nageswary.srikumaraguru@yrdsb.ca





Animals and Wildlife



By: Priti Jesman
Grade 7 student



Animals and wildlife are very important to human beings. They do a number of things to help our ecosystem. If we stopped caring for our environment, there would be no way that humans would be able to survive.

To start off, why wouldn't we be able to survive? Well, we need wildlife to help us with many simple things like breathing (humans need oxygen which our lungs pump into our blood and keep us alive.) However, the air has other harmful particles, like carbon dioxide (CO₂) that we don't need in our bodies. We keep these particles out of our bodies with the help of trees. Trees need CO₂ to survive, not oxygen like us. So, trees filter the air and keep excess carbon dioxide out of the human body. Although trees are very important, they aren't the only type of wildlife that helps humans. Insects are also very helpful to humans. One example of this would be bees. Bees are one of the world's most important insects. They are important because they help plants grow by spreading pollen around and on them. When they pollinate plants, they also help humans grow food because those plants will eventually turn into fruits and vegetables for us to eat. Another example of a very helpful insect is a worm. Worms

help clean our earth and get rid of food waste that we put in the garbage and on the ground. Parts of foods that you don't need to eat like apple cores and vegetable peelings are put in a compost bin so they can be turned into compost by the worms. Once the worms are done with the compost, it is put in soil and is very helpful when it is time to grow crops and plants.

What else do we need wildlife for? Wildlife plays a big part in helping us make food. Food is what every human being needs to survive. The food that humans eat needs to have the right nutrients to keep us alive. That's why we need animals that make our compost. Worms are a great help, but they aren't the only ones that humans need. Farm animals like cows, sheep, and goats also help with composting by using their waste to create fertilizer, which is great for the soil we use to grow plants. It may seem gross but this is one method farmers use to grow fruits and vegetables. These are some foods that we need to survive. These are very important because they are the base we use to create every other food. For example, if we stopped growing vegetables like potatoes, we wouldn't be able to create foods like french fries or potato chips. Another example with fruits is lemons. If we stopped growing them, we wouldn't be able to make drinks like lemonade. I'm sure that wouldn't please you.

Finally, my last reason why wildlife is essential to humans is because it is a source of

income to some people. Many people around the world have wildlife related jobs, which means that they need animals and plants to make a living. One example would be a veterinarian. These people take care of animals, making sure they are healthy and well. If we didn't care for animals, there would be no way vets could make a living. Another example of this is farmers. They need both animals and plants

which makes wildlife even more important to them. A third example would be a doctor who needs plants to make medicine. Lastly, scientists like biologists and botanists need to study plants and animals to study as a part of their job.

In conclusion, wildlife is essential for our survival and to maintain our society. It must be protected and should not be harmed. We must keep plants and animals safe.



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LIGHT GLARE AND VEHICLE ACCIDENT

The Invisible Dangers of Car Accidents Caused by Glare

OUE Research Institute



Nighttime driving is considered more dangerous than daytime driving, as many fatal accidents occur after dark. This increased danger may be due, in part, to the increased amounts of glare at night. Glare is a sensation caused by bright light in one’s field of view. Glare can reduce one’s ability to see (disability glare), create feelings of discomfort (discomfort glare), or both.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), USA, summarized existing findings regarding the effects of glare on drivers. When glare presents an issue to the driver, it is called “discomfort glare”. Glare can be an issue for drivers because it causes light to scatter in the eyes, reducing seeing distance and the contrast of roadway objects. Glare also increases a driver’s reaction and recovery times. For those reasons, glare may increase the risk of accidents.



The following factors increase the risk of discomfort glare occurring or causing an accident:

- Oncoming traffic is closer to a driver’s line of sight, producing more scattered light in their eyes from the oncoming vehicles’ headlamps.
- Two-lane highways also tend to have steeper curves and grades, which may potentially expose drivers to a higher range of glare from oncoming vehicles, as opposed to drivers on multi-lane roadways.
- Two-lane highways also tend to have lower light levels and fewer roadway markings, both of which can make the vision impairment from glare.
- As people age, their pupils shrink, causing less light to enter their eyes, causing lighter scatter from glare.



• Older people are also suffering from vision disorders, such as macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and detached retinas, which can also make glare discomfort worse.

Vehicle Design and Operation Factors:

- Improperly aimed headlamps can increase glare and reduce visibility for drivers.
- Headlamps placed too high could result in higher light levels entering the eyes of oncoming drivers, increasing discomfort glare.
- The color of the headlamps also plays a role in discomfort glare. Prior studies have indicated that people experience more discomfort when exposed to blue high-intensity discharge headlamps than when exposed to yellower, halogen headlamps.
- Drivers whose vehicles have dirty or damaged headlights have reduced forward visibility due to the dirty or damaged headlights producing lower light levels on the roadway. The filthy or damaged headlights can also increase the light levels aimed at oncoming traffic.
- Dirty or Damaged windshields can also scatter light and may increase the effects of glare.



Sun Light Glare Causes Accident

As we get into the colder months of the year, the days get shorter, and driving with sun glare becomes more of a problem. During winter, many GTA area commuters travel to work when the sun rises and come home when the sun is setting through Highway 401, 7, 407, QEW, and several local streets. If their job requires them to travel east for a significant distance in the morning and west in the late afternoon, then there is a good chance that they will be dealing with blinding sunlight. This increases the risk of a vehicle accident.



Traffic safety experts urge motorists to be sun-glare aware at sunrise and sunset this time of year. According to the NHTSA, sun glare causes approximately 9,000 crashes each year. It’s the second environmental-related reason drivers get into crashes, with the first being slippery roads. Sun glare accidents are rarely discussed in the media, but bright sunlight causes or contributes to thousands of auto accidents yearly. A comprehensive 10-year study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that bright sunlight was a factor in approximately one-third of all auto crash injuries during daytime hours.

According to the study:

Bright sunlight is associated with an increased risk of a life-threatening motor vehicle crash. An awareness of this risk might inform driver education, and safety warnings to prevent a life-threatening motor vehicle crash. The authors also point out that safe driving relies on vision, however, incline healthy people to recurrent mistakes when

judging size, position, and motion.

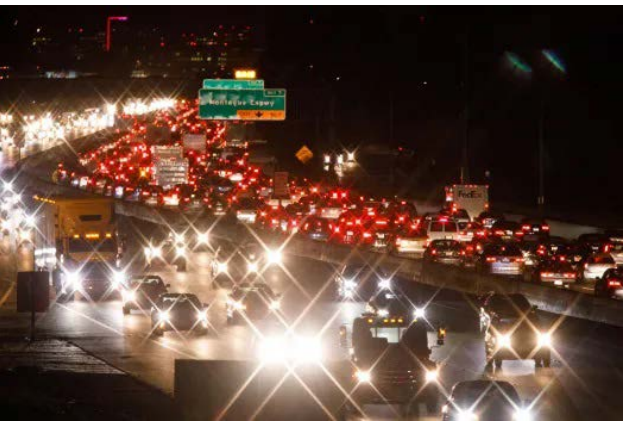
- Sun glare is not only capable of creating visual illusions. At its brightest, it can produce glare-induced blindness. And even if blinding sunlight persists for only a few seconds while driving, it can cause drivers to miss important details on the road, such as a vehicle pulling up alongside them or a pedestrian trying to cross the road in front of them. Safety experts shared tips for early-morning and late-afternoon drivers that may reduce the hazards:
- Be aware of sunrise and sunset times and the location of vehicles around you.
 - Adjust your drive time; starting just a few minutes earlier or later will change the sun’s position relative to the roadway.
 - Reduce speed when approaching an area where the sun hovers above the pavement.
 - Allow extra distance between your vehicle and others to reduce the risk of collisions.
 - Do not swerve, slow, or stop suddenly; other drivers behind you may not be able to slow or stop.
 - Be sure your windshield is clean before each trip. In addition, always have enough washer fluid available when you drive.
 - Wear polarized sunglasses when driving in sun glare and use the visors in the car to keep the glare out as much as possible.
 - While this may not be possible for everyone, if you can, take an alternate route that minimizes the time you drive east or west (depending on the time of the day).



- Consider leaving for work a little earlier and coming home later to avoid peak brightness.
- Current traffic conditions, real-time travel information available on Ontario 511 come from multiple sources. Cameras may also be viewed on the Ontario 511 Interactive Map.

Who is to Blame for a Glare Accident?

When a driver gets into an accident because they were blinded by sunlight, headlight, or artificial



light, glare is a circumstance beyond a driver’s control. Glare is not an unexpected occurrence comparable to an earthquake or a deer running out in front of the car. Motorists must exercise reasonable care and caution to protect themselves and others on the road, and part of the duty is to drive safely even during adverse conditions.



City of Brampton launches 5th annual Backyard Garden Program

On February 1, the City of Brampton's Backyard Garden Program returns for its fifth year. This eco-friendly initiative helps support food security in Brampton by providing participants with free soil, seeds, and helpful tips to grow their own backyard garden.

Residents are encouraged to donate their homegrown crops to local food banks and community organizations listed on the City's website. Last year, the program saw nearly 4,000 lbs of produce donated to residents in need from April to October 2023. Since 2020, the program has raised nearly 30,000 lbs in produce donations.

Participants will be asked to send a monthly update with pictures of their garden, which will be featured on the program's web page. Photos of this year's backyard gardens, gardening tips, tutorials, and resources will also be available on the web page. Residents can use the hashtag #BramptonBackyardGarden to share their backyard gardens on social media.

How to participate

Starting February 1, residents can register online to receive a free garden sampler seed kit and five bags of soil at www.brampton.ca/backyardgarden.

Delivery of seeds and soil will begin at the end of March.

Applications will close once the program reaches 3,000 participants. The program is open to new participants only.

The City thanks this year's program sponsors: Scotts Canada, Fieldgate Developments, Mattamy Homes and Paradise Developments.

Backyard Garden Club e-newsletter

Join our monthly Backyard Garden Club e-newsletter! Open to all gardening enthusiasts, the Club provides a monthly e-newsletter with gardening information, an opportunity for you to send in your gardening questions, get gardening advice and support from experts and community partners, such as the Brampton Horticultural Society, get exclusive offers, and more!

Background

Brampton's Backyard Garden Program launched in April 2020 as the first of its kind in Canada, in response to COVID-19. It is an extension of the City's existing Community Gardens program.

Quotes

"As we kick off the fifth year of the Brampton Backyard Garden Program, I'm thrilled to see the continued growth of this eco-friendly initiative. By empowering participants to grow their own gardens, we are promoting sustainability and helping to improve local food security. Thank you to our sponsors Scotts Canada, Fieldgate Developments, and Paradise Developments for their valuable support in making this program thrive. Let's come together, nurture our green spaces, and make a positive impact on Brampton's well-being."

- *Patrick Brown, Mayor, City of Brampton*

"The Backyard Garden Program has truly become a vibrant display of our community's strength and collaboration. It is heartening to see residents embracing the opportunity to grow their own food, share their harvests, and support those in need. I encourage everyone to join this enriching experience, and dig into creating a stronger, more connected Brampton."

- *Rowena Santos, Regional Councillor, Wards 1 & 5; Chair, Community Services, City of Brampton*

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, Brampton is home to nearly 700,000 people and more than 90,000 businesses. People are at the heart of everything we do. We are energized by our diverse communities, we attract investment,

and we are embarking on a journey to lead technological and environmental innovation. We partner for progress to build a healthy city that is safe, sustainable, and successful. Connect with us on X (Formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Learn more at www.brampton.ca

Joint Statement from City Council representatives of the Residential Rental Licensing (RRL) Pilot Task Force on Strengthening Brampton's Residential Rental Licensing Pilot Program

BRAMPTON, ON (January 31, 2024) – The RRL Pilot program was developed over 12 months in response to thousands of recurring complaints over many years from residents regarding rental units in residential neighbourhoods. The RRL program is being piloted in Wards 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7, areas which represent the highest concentration of recurring complaints related to health, safety and property standards. It is being monitored by a special task force which includes Council representatives and members of staff, with flexibility to enhance implementation.

Complaints regarding the growing number of residential rental units have worsened over the past four years. Crowding, fire safety, overflowing garbage, rodents, overgrown grass, snow removal, excessive parking particularly on lawns and sidewalks, along with other parking offences, are examples of ongoing issues that residents email and call about on a daily basis to Council offices. Reacting, managing, investigating, and enforcing a growing number of recurring complaints is costly to the City and proven to be ineffective.

The RRL pilot proactively establishes a system whereby landlords (with registered or currently unregistered units) are required to obtain and renew their licence annually. The RRL pilot intends to hold landlords accountable for their rental properties or risk having their licence revoked and/or be subject to inspection and/or substantial fines.

We appreciate the feedback received to date requesting that the City better streamline the process, particularly for existing registered units and we are implementing changes accordingly. We recognize that many landlords are providing much needed safe housing options for tenant's landlords who incur no fines on their rental properties during the year can expect reduced and/or waived renewal fees.

Municipalities have jurisdiction over the property through its owner, as it relates to upholding health, safety and property standards. However, the City of Brampton has passed a motion calling on the provincial government to make changes supporting the concerns expressed by landlords during the RRL pilot and we will continue with this advocacy.

The RRL Pilot Program protects the health and safety of all residents and maintains the quality of our neighbourhoods. The program ensures that landlords know their responsibilities and are held accountable.

Landlords who exploit tenants, operate unsafe housing, neglect property standards and deteriorate our neighbourhoods will not be tolerated. While residential rental units have an important role to play in addressing the housing crisis, landlords must operate responsibly and with effective accountability measures in place.

About Brampton:

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, Brampton is home to nearly 700,000 people and more than 90,000 businesses. People are at the heart of everything we do. We are energized by our diverse communities, we attract investment, and we are embarking on a journey to lead technological and environmental innovation. We partner for progress to build a healthy city that is safe, sustainable, and successful. Connect with us on X (Formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Learn more at www.brampton.ca.

Safety Tips for Coyote Mating Season in Brampton

Brampton is home to a range of wildlife, such as beavers, geese, deer, rabbits and coyotes. Although coyotes can be seen all year round, there are some seasons where there is more coyote activity. Beginning at the end of January through to the end of February, coyotes are in mating season. In this season, it is more likely to hear coyotes communicating or encounter a coyote as they seek a mate. To continue to keep residents safe, Brampton Animal Services is sharing helpful information and tips about how to continue to safely share the community with coyotes.

What is a coyote?

Coyotes are small, wild canines weighing about 30 to 40 pounds, with thick blonde, red or brown fur. They thrive in rural areas and do well living in ravines, valley lands and wooded areas in large cities. Coyotes are generally shy and non-confrontational; they can be seen all year round.

Why are there coyotes in Brampton?

Coyotes are not a new species in Ontario. All major cities across North America are home to them. Coyotes have benefitted from landscape changes that sprawl has brought and human activity, including clearing land for development. Cities and suburban areas provide access to coyote prey such as mice, rats, rabbits, and squirrels, and enough places to shelter in for rest and denning. However, many residents may never see a coyote as they prefer to stay unnoticed and away from potential threats such as people, dogs and cars.

Are coyotes dangerous?

Coyotes are naturally timid animals. Typically, they like to avoid people and confrontation, which has made them suitable for urban environments. Most coyote sightings are of coyotes who are focused on finding sources of food and water, a mate and protecting their families by patrolling against threats. They are mostly concerned about keeping other coyotes away. Because dogs are similar to coyotes, they will be treated as competition or a threat.

Understanding how to share our community with coyotes

Coyotes are wary of humans and tend to avoid contact as much as possible. It is important to be respectful of their habitats and exercise caution if a coyote is seen. Approaching them is strongly discouraged.

Key tips to remember:

- Keep pets on leashes.
- Always supervise your pets



Coyote with its puppy in a field - Source: Shutterstock

outdoors, even in your backyard.

- Do not feed wildlife.
- Dispose of waste properly and avoid littering.
- Do not leave pet food bowls or water bowls outdoors.
- Remove clutter from your yard.
- Keep cats indoors.

Brampton's Coyote Sighting Map

The City of Brampton's interactive Coyote Sighting Map is a tool for the community to stay informed about when coyotes are in the area and prevent coyote encounters. Residents and visitors are encouraged to use this tool to stay safe when planning activities in nature and to report coyote sightings.

Steps to take if you encounter a coyote

- Stay calm: It might feel difficult, but if you're in the community and are approached by a coyote, remain calm.
- Do not run away: Running away from a coyote may encourage them to follow you.
- Make yourself loud and large: If a coyote continues to approach you, make gestures and use objects to startle the coyote into running away – do not chase or touch the animal.
- Call 9-1-1: Seek help if scaring the animal fails to avert danger.

How to make your property coyote safe

- Don't feed coyotes or other wildlife: Feeding coyotes, intentionally or non-intentionally, can lead coyotes to associate humans with food, ultimately leading to negative interactions between coyotes, people and household pets.

- Take care of your home: Keep coyotes out of your home area by ensuring you have a solid, tall fence around your backyard. Remove any food sources, such as unused fruits or vegetables, pet food, or birdseed, on the ground. Maintain your garbage containers. Do not let your garbage overflow and store containers in a safe area, as they might attract small rodents, and in turn larger wildlife. Use motion-sensitive lights so your yard is less attractive for wildlife at night.
- Prevent potential coyote denning sites: Cut down overgrown vegetation and maintain the property, close off any openings that can be used as dens and lights on properties.

Quick facts

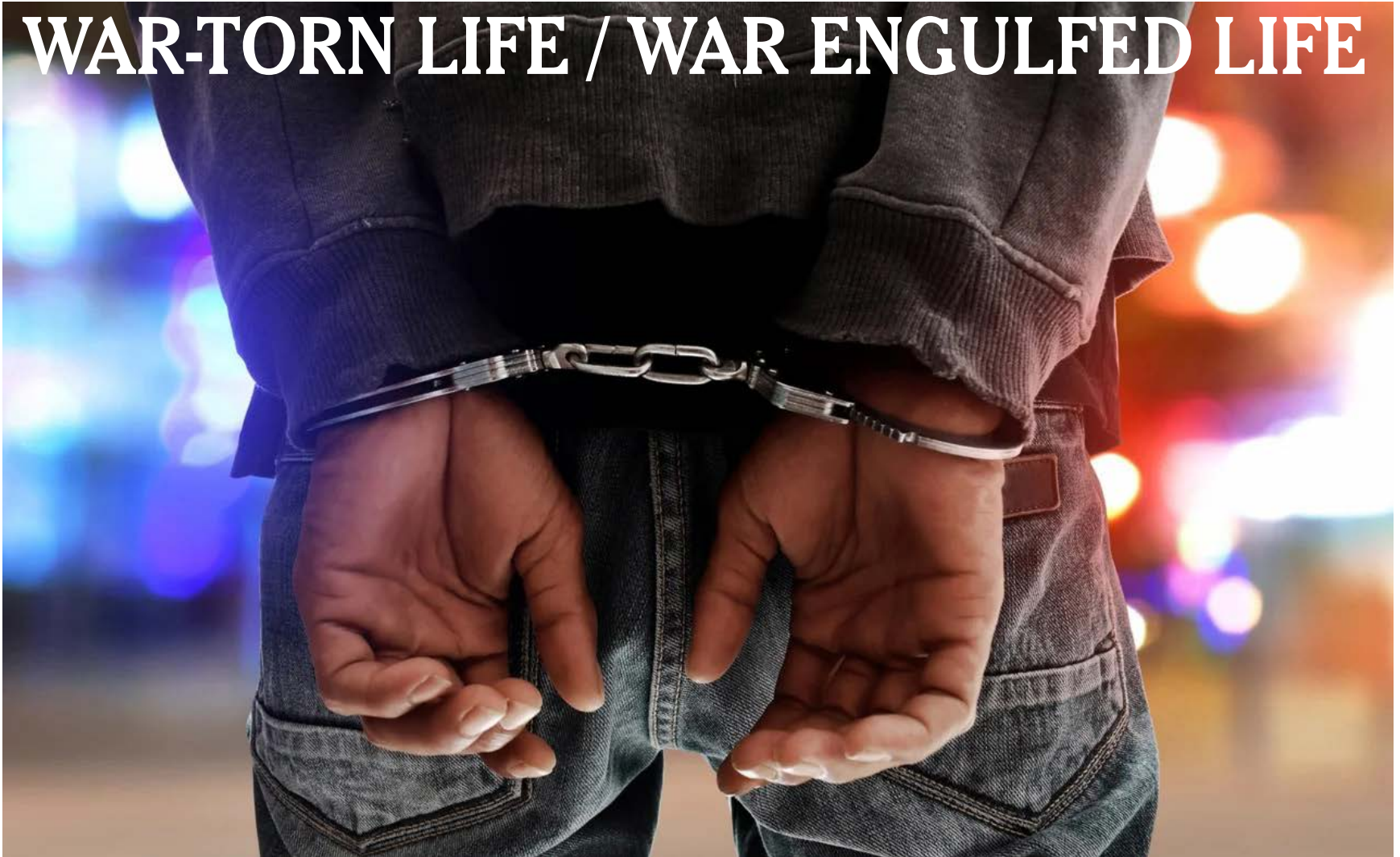
Of the coyote sightings in Brampton in 2023, there were no incidents of coyotes biting humans and two incidents of coyotes biting a dog.

Contacting Brampton Animal Services

When in doubt, call Brampton Animal Services. Animal services is always available to educate and inform, rescue, and respond to all inquiries about wildlife in Brampton. They can be reached at 905.458.5800. If you see a deceased or injured coyote, call Brampton Animal Services. Animal Control is on the road Monday to Friday from 7 am to 11 pm and on Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 8 am to 6:30 pm and is available after-hours for emergencies. If you see a coyote or other wild animal presenting an immediate threat to public safety, **call 9-1-1**. Visit www.brampton.ca/animalservices for more information and resources.



WAR-TORN LIFE / WAR ENGULFED LIFE



Original in Tamil by S. Satheeskumar

(An inmate of a Prison in Sri Lanka serving lifetime imprisonment)

English Version by Siva Sinniah

The cawing crows along the street, suddenly flew to the trees and hopped on branches. A9 highway running through the town of Killinochchi is bordered by the market walls on either side. The horns of vehicles passing by disturbed the morning silence. Maruthanagar nearer to the town appeared to be neither a town nor a village. Policemen with guns were seen standing here and there like soldiers. A bus enters the town for the first time and Somitharan is seated inside, talking to himself in silence. The bus glides along the street engulfed by Portia trees on both sides and the residents looked at it in surprise. On coconut leaves thatched fences, festoons were seen dangling on a rope, as an indication of a funeral house. The beat of drums was heard halfway. Omi having lost his athletic body with grief-stricken face, dressed in a white dress with handcuffs is seen inside. He was brought down from the vehicle by two Jailors in brown uniforms. A few males were seen standing here and there talking, with their faces showing signs of a sleepless night. The tin sheet gate of the property was wide open.

“Appa (*Dad*) our mother has departed having left us orphans” saying the two children came running towards him. The loud crying of the children brought tears in the eyes of the people around. On seeing the pathetic situation of Somi, who was unable to embrace the children, who were holding his legs crying, one of the jailors unlocked his handcuffs. In front of the house outside, under the tin sheet tent, rental chairs were seen kept randomly. His partner who lived with him, was seen in the coffin with a garland. Ghee-filled lamp with trembling flame was standing near her head. Somi’s shouting cries emanating from his belly, shook his nerves. He bowed down and touched the face of his beloved wife, whose eyes were closed.

“How you were able to leave us as orphans, Rani tell me now. His tears fell on her lifeless cheeks. He lifted his head and looked for known faces with affection. Relatives came

near and embraced him crying. Jailer who looked at his watch and reminded him of his allowed time of half an hour. Somi got ready to perform the last rites of his beloved partner.

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Somi’s and Sivarani’s marriage was a love marriage and as usual there was strong opposition from both parties. As time passed by, they agreed for their marriage. As a result, they had two children who are two years apart. The eldest boy is Sangeethan and the girl Kanitharani. Somi worked as a driver of a heavy truck, for a popular building construction company. Sivarani did not remain as a housewife only. She had a small Poultry Farm. Even though there was bombing and shelling around the village.

, people were accustomed to carefree living. Somis family was a small one and they had a happy life. Time passed swiftly.

In 2008 it was the beginning days of a grand attack on Northern province by the Sri Lankan forces. The South Sri Lanka was on an alert. Somi went to Colombo to buy some machinery for his company and was staying there. News about a CTB bus which was involved in a bomb blast and many were killed, started spreading rapidly. As a result, the armed forces and the police started checking city’s entry points and major intersections and arrested suspicious people. On checking the boarding house where Somi was residing, he was arrested on suspicion. His wife and children were shocked to hear the news.

In order to find out the real situation of his husband, Sivarani decided to travel to Colombo. She left her children in the custody of her mother and went out to get a pass to travel to Colombo.

It was 10:45 in the morning, the person who got down from the vehicle which stopped near the office entrance, limped his way in. His phone rang intermittently. After some time, a young boy came to her and said “sister you are wanted by our supervisor”. After greeting him, she told the entire incident of

her husband.” I also heard the story, since you are leaving the children behind, there is no problem in issuing the pass, but you must hand over the family card and one local resident must stand bail for you”, send the supervisor. Sivarani said “I have come prepared with all that”. “Okay no problem” said the supervisor. She left for Colombo in the early morning hours in a bus to meet her husband.

After passing Puliyanukulam barrier and reaching Vavuniya, she met her mother-in-law, who was staying with her daughter and took her along with her to Colombo. They went to the Red Cross Society in Vavuniya and made a complaint and it was recorded. On the advice of Red Cross Society, they even went to Sri Lanka human rights office and made a complaint and proceeded to Colombo.

Somi was seen sitting with a few others in the Colombo detention camp. Twenty hours since I was arrested Police were threatening me and asking many questions. So far no kicking or beating. Since they arrested me on suspicion, may allow me to go out soon. This was his deep thinking.

“Ade kottiya, me kolaya asamak karapang” (*Hey, tiger sign on this paper*) That was their order. Even though it was a regular signature, it was distorted due to trembling of my fingers.

Why they got my signature? May be they take me before a magistrate and release me on bail. This was his thinking.

Let me make sure by asking Dehiwela Aiyya (*Sir*)

“Brother this is a D.O. copy, that is the detention order sent by the court as per the defense Ministry’s Terrorism Prevention Act. They are going to detain you for six months under the pretext of inquiry”, said Dehiwela Aiyya. What he told me must be correct, since he knows the procedure. He was arrested for renting rooms for boys from Vanni. Poor man.

He was worried of the innocent men and the changing situations.

Short Story

FEATURE & OP-ED

.....

Oh my God they are going to keep me like this. I'm not going to be produced in court. This was his anxiety and question within himself. The days that followed, were torturous days without an end.

Every time he returned from the inquiry Dehiwala Aiyya applied ointment for his wounds. This was a routine work for him.

Two weeks passed by quickly. His wife and mother came to see him. Even though they did not believe him, he acted as though he's keeping well. Out of the 20 minutes allocated for the meeting, half the time was spent on both mothers crying. His mother pleaded to the policeman in broken Singhalese with both hands folded.

After handing over the parcel of rice, his wife told him "be brave we will get hold of a good lawyer. Don't lose hope. At home San-geethan and Tharani are waiting for your arrival". Sivaranii who was holding his hands, could not control her tears and her speech was interrupted. Mother embraced her son and said we spoke to Wellawatte uncle and he said that we will get a good lawyer.

The meeting time was over.

Lawyers who appeared in terrorism prevention Act cases demanded Lakhs of rupees. The jewelry which adorned the neck and ears of Sivarani went into Pawnbrokers boxes.

The words spoken by the lawyer, who received an advance, gave confidence as a savior in the mind of Sivarani. The children who expected their father to return home with the mother, got only apples from her.

"Children your Appa (*Dad*) is doing well. We have appointed a lawyer to speed up his release. Don't be worried" these were the comforting words to them.

Area west of Vanni was destroyed by the onslaught of the government forces. People were moving towards the Eastern areas daily. There were non-Stop bombing and missile attacks.

People of Killinochi also started packing their belongings. Sivarani with her mother, moved from place to place to safeguard the children. In order to find out her husband's situation, she travelled quarter of a mile to the telephone booth from her temporary shelter at Puthukudiyiruppu. After waiting with paining legs she got the call.

"I spoke to the lawyer and he said that he can only do something if Somi is produced at the court".

"Then uncle what happened to the promise he made, when receiving the advance, that he will speak to someone in the police department and get him released."

"You can't talk to them like this. He says that this is a difficult case and quoting different laws and said that they are afraid to do anything. what am I supposed to do?" said Wellawatte uncle.

Rani put the blame on her fate.

.....

"Don't worry about what is right or wrong. If you'll do what we ask you to do, we will send you out of the country and you don't have to go to the Tigers again. But if you are adamant, then you are digging your own grave", so said the police.

What are they trying to tell me. How to act under these circumstances.

Somi thought deeply in silence.

Suddenly he remembered the words of Dehiwela Aiyya.

"These fellows will speak nicely to you, to get you to accept the accusations, to show to the authorities that they have got the actual culprit. If you don't agree, they will torture you to get the prepared documents signed by you. You have to be very careful. Your signed documents will be produced at the court to say that you willingly signed them and get you punished."

Somi refused to sign those documents in

Sinhala, the language which is foreign to him.

The inquirers were enraged.

They were angry since their plan did not workout.

As a result, Somi received many scars on this body.

This went on every time he was taken for inquiry from the detention camp.

Since the torture and beating were unbearable he was forced to sign the documents. At last, the inquirers let out a sigh of relief.

His term in the detention camp was extended thrice and after 18 months the inquiry came to an end.

For the first time, he was produced before a magistrate and was sent to a remand jail.

He was faced with a totally new situation in his life for the second time.

.....

Sivarani after spending some years in the Chettikulam shelter, returned home with her relations and other villagers. There are only temporary tin sheds and nothing else. Not even the greenery. The poor Relief Fund by the government was not enough for the family. So she left her children in the custody of her mother and went to work as a daily labor. Born with four older brothers she lived as a darling of the family and had a beautiful physical body, which now underwent a total transformation. The poorest life of her's was seen all over the body.

Somi the accused culprit of the Piliyandala bombing case, was faced with a criminal case.

Sivarani's small savings from her labor work went to the account of the lawyer. The case dragged on and her husband was never released.

Children's education, husband's case and daily living became unmanageable. She went with hunger for days.

Tiring daily work was the only solution to carry on with the family life. Those were red letter days.

Even though that work was very hard, since it brought more money, she got into building construction work. Making cement blocks and carrying them on her head to the site daily, was her work. In addition, she brought the empty cement bags home, cleaned them and made small shopping bags, after cooking and when the children were sleeping. She sold the shopping bags to the boutiques nearby. In between her work, she joined the protest for the release of political detainees organized by all those who were affected.

Hard work and starvation turned her into an asthmatic patient.

A few who came to the help of a political prisoner's wife tried to bargain her body for sex. This made her hate the entire world. Seeing her pathetic condition, some of her relatives and neighbors volunteered to pay her husband's lawyer's fee.

After a long 9 years the inquiry came to an end and the court decided on the verdict date.

Sivarani was admitted to the hospital and was receiving treatment. That day she woke up early morning, wiped the face with a wet cloth and went slowly to the Pillayar Temple in the hospital premises. She prayed that today's verdict must be the end of all our troubles and that Pillayar should make it possible.

The temple priest chanted mantras and brought the puja to an end and placed holy Ash on her forehead.

There was absolute silence in the court on that day. There was an unusual presence of the media.

Somi was seated in the accused cage and his mother was in the spectators crowd. As per the inquiry conducted all these years, there were 93 accusations against him.. They

were proved beyond doubt. Hence as per each accusation the court passed a sentence of 93 years of life in prison.

It was a heavy blue to Somi and his family. This was a historic judgment in the annals of Sri Lankan Court history.

His mother passed out in court.

All those people who were there, did freeze for a moment.

"How can I tell this to his wife and children?" his mother cried aloud.

.....

Sivarani was watching the news on the TV in the female ward. Fate began to play it's part. On hearing the news her heart started beating fast and there was pressure in the chest and the wheezing increased. On seeing this a nurse came to her rescue.

Rani expected a favorable judgement on that day and hoped to rejoin her husband and to live with the children happily after this. But it ended in a great blow and made her a permanent patient on bed. She cried for many hours and got tired.

She was more worried about her children's future. Sleep evaded her for many days. She was thin and lean without any smile on the face. The life of a family was in a big question. Her sadness gradually increased and engulfed her. She was transferred to an emergency ward and was given oxygen on a ventilator. Saline tubes were seen on her arms. She was finding it difficult to breathe. A group of medical personnel tried to save her. Time was running fast. Her wheezing deteriorated and the pulse was going weak and the doctors were worried.

.....

The bell rang at the beginning of the third period at the Junior School. Her uncle was at the Principal's office to take the children to the hospital.

"Children your mom is in a serious condition and would like to see both of you. Come with me" so he said.

They may have understood the situation. They looked at each other.

.....

Funeral rites were performed as per Hindu tradition but swiftly. Children standing close to their father placed flowers on the body of their mother, crying loudly. "Rani your love life has ended so tragically, now you don't have any difficulty. So you rest in peace" so said Somi and felt that he was finding it difficult to breathe.

Mother's coffin was lifted and was carried to the Cremation ground.

Father was again handcuffed and was taken to the prison van.

Somi bearing the uncontrollable grief walked in silence, slowly to the van.

Children cried saying "Appa now that Mamma is no more with us, how can you leave us like this? who is there to look after us? you are leaving us as orphans on the street." Somi's heart began to beat faster.

Bystanders turned away wiping their tears.

"We can't delay any more," said the jailer. Somi was helped to get into the van. The separation and sadness started filling the minds of the children. They looked at each other and suddenly got into the van with their father.

This story won the first price in a competition conducted by the E-paper, KUVIYAM which was run by late Pon Kulendiren for many years. I had the opportunity of selecting the best stories from 80 stories received from various countries along with three other judges. It is very sad to record that, this competition was conducted by Pon Kulendiren before a few months of his demise. May his soul rest in peace.



COMMUNITY WATCH



Durham Tamils Association Serving Our Tamil Community Over 20 Years

Durham Tamils Association is always looking for ways to help our members, youth, and our seniors. We are continuing to provide free virtual activities almost every day for kids to seniors. 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.

DTA'S HOMELAND PROJECTS

DTA is proud to announce that we have completed 47 homeland projects as of Dec 31st 2023. Watch out more for this year as we wish to continue this momentum and provide more opportunities back home.

Thank you to Mr. Subramaniam Kathirithamby & Mr Maylvahanam (Sri Lanka) for coordinating this project.

DTA EVOLVING ELDER CARE IN HOME SUPPORT

We are proud to announce that DTA will be providing Evolving Elder Care in Home support. This will allow us to provide these services to any Seniors in need in Durham. We can provide following service:

- Meal Delivery
- Transportation
- Volunteer Drop offs:
 - Grocery Assistance
 - Doctors Appointments
- Friendly Visits
- Light House Keeping Assistance

For more information please contact our office Mon-Fri (647) 968 9549 or (647) 286 9549. You can also visit our website @ DTAseniorsinhomesupport.ca

DTA SENIOR'S FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING

DTA Senior's March monthly meeting will be held on Sunday February 25, 2024 at 5:00 pm at DTA Centre.

66B Harwood Ave S, Ajax L1S 2H6.

Event Time: 5-9 pm

Please all Senior (ages 55+) members attend the meeting.

Register online:

durhamtamils.org

Members who were born in March, please mention in the comments section to organize your cake-cutting at the meeting.

Durham Tamil Association Evolving Elder Care In-Home Support Senior /Transportation Service



Seniors Onboard: A volunteer-based service for eligible seniors with low-Income and vulnerable, aged 55 and up.

OUR SERVICE

- Temple Drop off (Drop off / pick up)
- Church Drop off (Drop off / pick up)
- Medical Appointment (Drop off/ pick up)
- Grocery shopping (Drop off / pick up)



CONTACT US

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 9:00am - 5:00PM

Contact Number:

- (647) 968-9549
- (647) 286-9549

For More Information Visit Our Website:



dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Age Well at Home Initiative



Durham Tamil Association Evolving Elder-care:

Training

- Free Training with Certification
- Volunteer Travel Expense \$0.58/km
- Unlock valuable life skills with Free Standard Cpr and First Aid Training

Benefits

- Shape your future
- Providing up to 50 volunteer hours
- Free Vulnerable Check

Contact US

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 9:00am - 5:00PM

Contact Number:

- (647) 968-9549
- (647) 286-9549

Durham Tamil Association

66 Harwood Ave, S.Ajax L1S 2H6



Serving Eight Municipalities

- Brock
- Uxbridge
- Scugog
- Pickering
- Oshawa
- Clarington
- Ajax
- Whitby



For More Information Visit the website: dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca

Volunteers Needed!



Join our volunteer team and gain more than just experience – unlock valuable life skills while making a positive impact on seniors' lives in Durham!

Volunteer Gala : Twice a Year!

- Summer Gala 2024
- Winter Gala 2024
- Spring Gala 2025
- September Gala 2025

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Age Well at Home Initiative





DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION'S 'DTA TOURS IS ORGANIZING A 12-DAY SPRING TRIP TO FLORIDA.

12 DAY TRIP TO FLORIDA

DATE: FEB 14TH TO FEB 25th 2024.

Pricing :

\$1500 including bus tour and accommodation.
(\$500 deposit with registration to hold a seat).

REGISTER ONLINE: durhamtamils.org

(Once you register someone will contact you with additional details).

Please note: * DTA also strongly suggests all passengers take their own out-of-country medical insurance. DTA is not responsible for medical insurance.

Requirements:

- Canadian Citizens: Canadian Passport
- If you are a Permanent Resident card holder, please bring your passport with your American visa.

DTA'S SENIORS

DTA is keeping our seniors fully occupied with multiple activities and programs. 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 durhamtamils.org. 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.

THANK YOU TO DTA'S ANNUAL SPONSORS

DTA thanks our annual sponsors Computek College of Business, Healthcare & Technology

Nava Wilson LLP. Chapel Ridge Funeral Home & Cremation, and all our sponsors for your continued support throughout the year. If you are interested in being annual sponsor please reach out to the below contacts.

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

Tel 905.428.7007

Unity Is Strength

COMMUNITY WATCH



TAMIL SCHOOL

Tamil class registration is open for the School Year from 2023-2024!

In-person or Virtual class options are available!



Evolving Elder Care In-Home Support Meal Delivery

Offers the option of either veg or non veg

- Hot, Freshly Prepared Meals
- Timely deliveries are Coordinated by Volunteers



CONTACT US:

Office Hours: Monday through Friday
Contact Number:
(647) 968-9549
(647) 286-9549

Please place your order a minimum of 5 days before the delivery date.
Eligibility: Vulnerable and Low-Income Seniors: Ages 55 and Up

[Visit Our Website to Register: dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca](http://dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca)

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Age Well at Home Initiative



The Durham Tamil Association introduces "Evolving Elder Care In-Home Support," a volunteer-based service for eligible seniors with low-income and vulnerable, aged 55 and up.

OUR SERVICE

- Meal Delivery
- Transportation
- Volunteer Drop-offs:
 - Grocery Assistance
 - Doctors Appointments
- Friendly Visits
- Light House Keeping Assistance

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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

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DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION EVOLVING ELDER CARE IN-HOME SUPPORT



Ages 55 and up

Vulnerable and Low-Income seniors

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Age Well at Home Initiative



Tamil Heritage Month celebrated at event in Waterloo Region

Members of the Tamil community in Waterloo Region came out in numbers on Sunday, January 14th 2024 to celebrate Tamil Heritage Month and Thai Pongal celebration at the Holy family Croatian Banquet Hall in Kitchener, Ontario.

Dennis Loyola, president of the Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region, said the Tamil population in the Region has seen a steep increase during the past two years due to immigration and movement of people from the City of Toronto. The association has been a pillar to the community. A celebration to mark the 35th Anniversary in May has been planned.

Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Hon. Gary Anandasangaree was Guest

of honour at the celebration in a show of appreciation for his contributions. "Tamil Heritage Month is a secular celebration ... of multi-faiths, and we celebrate in Canada to recognize the language."

This year, hundreds, from infants to elders, gathered to celebrate for the first time since the start of the pandemic. "We are a very vibrant community, committed to restoring and holding on to our identity," said Anandasangaree. At over 5,000 years old, he says, Tamil is considered the world's oldest living language in use today. Its community encompasses people from Sri Lanka, India, Singapore and Malaysia.

The event had colourful dance, drama and speech. Some of the notable guests include

Hon. Bardish Chagger, MP Waterloo, Tim Louis MP Kitchener, Berry Vrabanovic Mayor of Kitchener, Ayo Owodunni City Councillor Kitchener, Collin James Regional Councillor Waterloo Region, Mark Crowell Waterloo Region Police Chief and others attended the event. Traditional Tamil food was served on banana leaf was the high light of the day. The food was catered by Raja Chettinad Restaurant of Kitchener.

Organizers estimated that more than 700 people attended event. January was proclaimed Tamil Heritage Month by Parliament in 2016. The month celebrates Tamil language and culture and the contributions Tamils have made to Canada.





Inauguration of Murugan temple in Waterloo Region, A milestone for local South Asian community



Kitchener, ON: The inauguration of Sri Murugan Temple of Waterloo Region & Community Centre on January 26th, 2024, was dreams come true for some. A very large turnout of devotees attended the event at Doon Pioneer Community Center in Kitchener.

The idea of bringing all South Indian devotees together originated in the year 2002 when the first ceremony was held at Lutheran Hall in Waterloo. It was followed by small scale Hindu festivals over a period of time and monthly bajans, Villakku Poojai, Thirupugal etc.

The inauguration saw the unveiling of the Ganapathy statue and Vel by Sivasri Panchadchara Viyakumara Kurukkal, Chief Priest of Sri Varasithithi Vinaayagar Temple of Toronto. The idols were brought from Jaffna, Sri Lanka and donated by Ken Shri Shanker and family.

The President of the Temple society Mr. Sivakumar Somasundram welcomed the devotees. In his speech he said "Fundraising and support are essential pillars of our temple's foundation. Your contributions, both financial and moral, will enable us to realize our vision and create a sacred space where our community can come together to worship, to celebrate, and to find comfort in the presence of the divine". It will be a "community temple" catered to Tamils, Malayalam, Telugu and others he said.

Mrs. Sushma Rao, the Secretary of the Temple society emphasised the cultural and spiritual significance of the temple and acknowledged the contributions of the community and each individual's efforts in bringing the temple project closer to reality.

"It's god's grace that we, in the Region of Waterloo slowly progressing towards a fully fledged South Indian Dravidian temple for the community. Our next step is to obtain a place and also to register the society into a "charitable status" said Mr. Ken Shri Shankar the treasurer of the temple.

The poojai festivities continued with cultural performances. Dance and music added color and vibrancy to the celebration, reflecting the rich culture and traditions. The performance ranged from singing of bhajans by young children, dance performance enacting the important episodes about Lord Muruga and the finale was a kavadi performance and dance-drama based on the 6 sacred Murugan shrines.

The inauguration concluded with a community feast / annadanam. This event which was attended by 600-700 devotees, served as a reminder of the upcoming temple's role not only as a spiritual center but also as a vibrant center for cultural exchange and collective growth for generations to come.



On behalf of local Indian community, Hon. Bardish Chagger, Waterloo MP attended the event along with other dignitaries.



Disc'over some outdoor fun with disc golf

Be a good neighbour and try to clear your sidewalk. You may have put your clubs away for the season, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy a round of golf – disc golf that is! People of all fitness levels have been playing disc golf since 1970, and the sport continues to grow in popularity locally and internationally. Disc golf is similar to traditional golf, with a few twists. Players throw discs or frisbees into metal baskets mounted on the ground instead of using clubs to hit a ball into a hole.

Mississauga currently has two outdoor disc golf courses that residents can play at for free year-round. You just need to bring your own frisbee and have fun! And the best part? You won't have to hunt for your ball.

- Dellwood Park – 6-hole course (598 Arbor Rd.)
- Spruce Park – 4-hole course (280 Angelene St.)

How to play

Players throw a disc or frisbee from a tee-off area into a metal basket. The goal of the game is to make each throw in the fewest tries. You can play disc golf on your own or competitively with a group. The player with the lowest total tries wins. A game lasts between 30-45 minutes on average, but it all depends on how long you want to play!

Get active this winter

With the colder weather here, spending



time outdoors and getting active is good for your physical and mental well-being. Whether you're just starting or perfecting your throw, we encourage you to play disc golf. Remember to dress for the weather and wear comfortable footwear.

City remains committed to reducing SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Plastic can take more than 1,000 years, or 100 decades, to decompose and break down. The plastic you throw away today will start to decompose in 3024. Unfortunately, much of this waste ends up in landfills or as litter, causing harm to Mississauga's environment and wildlife. To help reduce plastic waste, the City has proposed the Reduction of Single-use Items in City Facilities and Operations policy to limit single-use items purchased in all City facilities and operations.

"We're dedicated to reducing plastic waste at the City," said Acting Mayor John Kovac. "That's why this policy is so important. Reducing single-use plastics is not just beneficial for the environment but also crucial for Mississauga's future. Simple changes like swapping to reusable cutlery, straws and water bottles and making use of compostable bags can have a big impact. We can significantly decrease the amount of plastic waste in landfills, creeks, green spaces and natural habitats. Action is needed today for a better tomorrow."

What are single-use plastics?

Single-use plastics refer to plastic materials intended for one-time use and are generally discarded after their use. Single-use plastics prioritize convenience over durability and repeated use. Examples of single-use plastic include plastic grocery bags, product packaging, straws, coffee cups and lids, plastic cutlery, fast food containers and plastic sandwich bags.

The Reduction of Single-use Items in Facilities and Operations policy is intended to:

- Limit the purchase and use of single-use items in City facilities and operations.
- Educate City staff on environmentally sustainable alternatives to single-use items.
- Communicate the City's commitment to environmental stewardship.
- Identify roles and responsibilities in reducing the purchase and use of single-use items.

"According to the Government of Canada,

about three million tonnes of plastic waste is discarded every year, with less than nine percent of it being recycled," said Jodi Robillos, Commissioner, Community Services. "While single-use plastics are still accessible for purchase in Canada, including things like resealable plastic bags, garbage bags and zip ties, the City is committed to reducing plastic waste and recommending alternatives to plastic products. The City will also continue to educate and promote waste reduction, as well as reduce the use of non-recyclable, single-use plastics in internal operations where feasible."

The environment and single-use plastics Plastic waste pollution has a severe impact on the City's ecosystems. It poses a threat to Mississauga's wildlife – as many animals find themselves entangled or mistakenly ingesting plastic thinking it's food. This can lead to animals getting trapped or injured, or even dying due to ingestion. Decomposing plastic can also release toxic chemicals that can harm aquatic life and contaminate water sources including soil, creeks and rivers.

Actions to reduce plastic waste

By making small changes to our day-to-day lives, you can help reduce plastic waste. Here are some easy ways to limit your plastic consumption:

- Carry reusable bags when shopping.
- Use a reusable water bottle instead of buying plastic bottles. Try out a water bottle filling station available at all community centres.
- Use a reusable cutlery set instead of disposable plastic utensils.
- Choose to buy items with less plastic packaging.
- Pack lunches and snacks in reusable containers instead of plastic bags.
- Shop at bulk food stores to reduce packaging waste when possible.
- Cook at home instead of ordering takeout (takeout food often comes in single-use packaging).
- Bring coffee or a hot drink from home



in a reusable mug.

- Switch to bar soaps instead of bottled shampoos and body washes.
- Repurpose old plastic containers and bottles.
- Recycle items properly.
- Participate in local city-wide litter clean-up
- Avoid littering. Throw your waste in the proper waste bin available throughout the city.

These actions along with other actions like reducing your waste, shopping local and eating more plant-based foods can make a positive impact on the environment.

On June 20, 2018, City Council passed Motion 15.4 to request the Federal Government to develop a strategy to reduce plastic pollution. The Federal Government implemented the Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations, which came into effect in 2022. Late last year, Canada's Federal Court overturned the Federal ban on single-use plastics. This court ruling has no impact on the City's proposed Reduction of Single-use Items in City Facilities and Operations policy.

This policy is an action within the Climate Change Action Plan. Learn more about the City's Climate Change Action Plan and its progress.

The Reduction of Single-use Items in City Facilities and Operations policy was endorsed by the Environmental Action Committee on November 7, 2023 and will go to Council with final approvals on Wednesday, January 31, 2024.

Why feeding birds can do more harm than good

It's not uncommon to see people feeding wildlife, especially birds, throughout Mississauga. However, while feeding birds, like pigeons, can seem harmless, it can have negative consequences including serious health and safety concerns for residents and birds.

Feeling the urge to feed the birds? Please don't. Think twice before you toss that next breadcrumb – here's why.



Why you should avoid it

Concerns for wildlife feeding in Mississauga relate to leaving food for birds. Feeding birds can cause overpopulation, spread disease and increase competition for food, aggressive behaviour and unsanitary conditions. It can also cause birds to rely on humans for food and damage buildings and structures. Infrastructure, like buildings, parking lots and sidewalks made of metal and stone, can become severely damaged by the corrosive uric acid found in pigeon droppings.

Catch basins or storm drains can be blocked with feathers, nesting materials and bird droppings, resulting in structural damage, flooding and higher water quality risks.

Feeding birds in public places can be a nuisance to other people and businesses.

Pigeons

Pigeons may look cute, but they can be troublesome. These birds are found almost everywhere around the world, including Mississauga. Pigeons are easily recognizable by their distinctive blue, grey and white colouring and iconic bobbing head and cooing sound.

Unlike migratory birds, pigeons stay in one place all year round. They breed and roost in large groups around buildings, causing high noise levels and large amounts of feces, which can be a headache to clean up.

These birds have a strong instinct to nest in urban areas, making it difficult to remove them from populated areas, especially if they have consistent access to food and shelter.

Pigeons tend to rely on humans for their food, particularly seeds, crackers, fruits, grains, bread and garbage.



Health risks

A health risk is also associated with pigeons as they may contaminate food or transmit fungi, bacteria or parasites in their feces. It's worth noting that Cryptococcosis, Histoplasmosis and Psittacosis are some diseases linked to pigeon droppings. Inhaling the dust created while cleaning the droppings can lead to an infection with these diseases.

Providing food to birds may result in their reliance on humans for food, losing their ability to forage for themselves. Feeding birds with inappropriate food can also pose a significant risk to their health. Some foods lack essential nutrients for survival, leading to malnutrition or even death. It's crucial to ensure that birds can access a balanced and varied diet that meets their nutritional needs. Providing them with foods that are high in fat, salt or sugar – like chips, fries, crackers and nuts can also cause health problems, such as obesity, liver disease, stroke and heart disease.

Offering wildlife food can often attract other pests, like rats and mice, which in turn, can attract larger predators like coyotes.

Complaints and fines

Feeding wildlife is illegal in Mississauga. This includes actions like leaving food out, not disposing of food waste properly or dumping food on the ground. These actions are considered leaving attractants, and they are enforceable offences under the City's



Animal Care and Control By-law.

Feeding wildlife can encourage them to enter urban areas, increasing their chances of being involved in accidents, potentially leading to property damage, injury or even death.

The City's Animal Services team works to educate and inform the public about the dangers of feeding wildlife. They enforce regulations prohibiting animal feeding in public areas and work with others in the community, like private business owners, to help promote responsible and safe interactions with our wildlife.

Last year, Animal Services received 284 calls from Mississauga residents about wildlife feeding concerns at



several parks, trails and private/public parking lots.

Staff has pursued the installation of "Do not feed signs" and conducted regular patrols in areas where animal feeding has been prevalent.

Wildlife feeding is a city-wide issue. Many patrols have been happening at local plaza parking lots and parks including Rockwood Mall, David Yakichuk Park and Hurontario Street and Dundas Street where many pigeons have been roosting. In total, 657 proactive patrols were completed in 2023 aimed at addressing incidences of feeding. To ensure the message is taken seriously, Animal Services has been issuing fines to individuals identified feeding wildlife, with several fines being handed out in recent months. The minimum fine amount on each ticket is \$365, and fines for further violations can increase up to \$100K.

While eight tickets have been issued for wildlife feeding in 2023, with the majority of them being related to feeding birds, despite best efforts, those feeding wildlife often evade our Animal Services officers and leave the scene making it harder to issue tickets.

Pigeon problems?

If you are experiencing issues with pigeons in your neighbourhood, try the following:

- Remove food sources (e.g. bird feeders)
- Clean up and store pet food securely
- Eliminate water sources
- Clear balconies of debris
- Check for signs of nesting
- Remove nesting materials
- Alert building management
- Seal elevated openings and entrances with bird netting to take away access to ledges and balconies
- Use flashing lights and motion-activated noise deterrents
- Place deterrents like plastic owls, hawks or raccoons in the eaves
- Apply gel to ledges to make surfaces unpleasant for birds' feet
- Secure garbage in sealed containers or bins
- Mix cinnamon, peppermint essential oil or cayenne pepper into a spray bottle of water to deter pigeons

Next time you want to feed the birds, think twice and remember that observing wildlife from a distance and allowing them to fend for themselves supports the well-being of both animals and our community.



SPECIAL FEATURE

SRI ANNAMALAIYAR ARUNACHALESWARAR TEMPLE, THIRUVANNAMALAI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

INTRODUCTION

Arunachaleswarar Temple, also called **Annamalaiyar Temple** is a Hindu temple dedicated to the deity Lord Siva, located at the base of Arunachala hill in the town of Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu, India. It is significant to the Hindu sect of Saivism as one of the temples associated with the five elements, the **Pancha Bhootha Sthalas**, and this one specifically represents the element **Fire** or **Agni**. Lord Siva is worshipped as Arunachaleswarar or Annaamalaiyaar, and is represented by the Linga, with His idol referred to as **Agni Lingam**. His consort Parvathi is depicted as **Unnamalai**



Amman. The Arunachaleswara temple is called the **Manipooraga Sthalam**, and is associated with the **Manipooraga chakra**. Manipooraga is the chakra associated with the **solar plexus**.

HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

During the 17th century CE, the temple along with the Thiruvannamalai town came under the dominion of the Nawabs of the Carnatic. As the Moghul empire came to an end, the Nawab lost control of the town, with confusion and chaos ensuing after 1753. Subsequently, there were periods of both Hindu and Muslim stewardship of the temple, with Muraru Raya, Krishna Raya, Mrithis Ali Khan and Burkat Ullakhan besieging the temple in succession. As European

incursions progressed, Thiruvannamalai was attacked by French Soupries, Sambrinet and the English Captain Stephen Smith. While some repelled, others were victorious. The French occupied the town in 1757 and the temple along with the town came under the control of the British in 1760. In 1790, Thiruvannamalai town was captured by Tippu Sultan, who ruled from 1782 to 1799. During the first half of the 19th century, the town along with the temple came under the British rule. From 1951, under the provisions of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, the temple has been maintained by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu. In 2002, the Archaeological Survey of India declared this temple a National Heritage Monument and took over its stewardship. Widespread protests and litigations with the Supreme Court of India and it led the Archeological Survey to cede the temple back to the Hindu Religious Endowment Board of the Tamil Nadu Government.

POOJAS AND FESTIVALS

There are six daily rituals at various times from 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., and twelve yearly festivals. The **Karthigai s festival** celebrated during the full moon day in the Tamil month of **Karthigai** (November-December). On that day, a huge beacon is lit atop the hill. It can be seen for miles around. hills. It symbolizes the



Siva Lingam of fire joining the sky. This event is witnessed by over three million pilgrims. On the day preceding each full moon, pilgrims circumnavigate the temple base and the Arunachala hills in a worship called **Girivalam**, a practice carried out by one million pilgrims yearly. According to Hindu legend the walk removes sins, fulfills desires and helps achieve freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth, On the day of yearly **Chitra Pournami**, the full moon day, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims come from across the world to worship Arunachaleswara. Five temple Cars, called **thaer**, with wooden carvings are used for the procession.



Tiruvoodal, is another festival celebrated during the first week of the **Tamil month Thai** at mid January of every year. On the morning of Mattu Pongal between 15th and 16th of January, Nandi is decorated with garlands made of fruits, vegetables and sweets. The festival deities of Arunachaleswara and Unnamalai Ammal are taken out of the temple to Tiruvoodal street to enact the **oodal** (or love Tift) between the two in the evening.

THE TEMPLE COMPLEX, TOWERS, SHRINES AND HALLS

Temple Complex

The temple is situated at the bottom of the Arunachala hills and faces east, lying over 25 acres. The walls on the east and west measure 700ft. or 210m, the south 1,479 ft. or 451 m.

SPECIAL FEATURE



and the north 1,590 ft. or 480 m. The present masonry and towers date back to the 9th century CE, as seen from an inscription in the structure made by Chola Kings who ruled at that time. Further inscriptions indicate that before the 9th century CE, Thiruvannamalai was under the Pallava Kings, who ruled from Kancheepuram.

Towers

It has four gateway towers (Gopurams) on its four sides. The eastern tower, the Rajagopuram is the tallest in the temple. The base of the Rajagopuram is made of granite, measuring 135 ft. or 41 m. by 98 ft. or 30 m. It was started by **King Krishnadevaraya** (1509-29 CE) of the **Vijayanagara dynasty** and completed by **Sevappa Nayakar** (1532-80 CE). The inscriptions indicate that the tower was built at the behest of **Sivanesa and his brother Lokanatha** in 1572 CE. The south tower is called **Thirumanjanagopuram** and the west tower is called **Periyagopuram**. The **Thanjavur Andhra Raja Charitamu** mentions that **Krishnadevaraya** built the tower and the outer precincts of the temple. The temple has a total of five precincts, each of which holds



a huge Nandi, the sacred bull of Siva. Towers include the **Vallala Maharaja Gopuram** and **Kili (Parrot) Gopuram**.

The present masonry structure was built during the **Chola dynasty** in the 9th century, while later expansions are attributed to the **Vijayanagara rulers of the Sangama Dynasty** (1336-1485 CE), the **Saluva Dynasty** and the **Tuluva Dynasty** (1491-1570 CE). The temple is being maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Tamil Nadu Government.

The western world learnt of Thiruvannamalai during the mid-20th century, through the work of Sri **Ramana Maharishi** (1879-1950 CE).

Shrines

The temple has numerous shrines, with those of Sri Arunachaleswara and Sri Unnamalai Amman being the most prominent. The main shrine of Arunachaleswara faces east, housing images of Nandi and Surya and is the oldest structure in the temple. Behind the walls of the sanctum, there is an image of Venugopalaswamy (Krishna), an incarnation of Vishnu. Around the sanctum, there are

images of Somaskanda, Durga, Chandeshvara, Gajalakshmi, Arumughaswami (Karthikeya), Dakshinamurthi, Swarnabhairavar, Nataraja and Linghodbhava, the image of Siva emanating from Lingam. The **Palliyarai**, the divine room for resting deities, is located at the first precinct around the sanctum. The shrine of His Consort, Annamalai Amman, lies in the second precinct, with Amman depicted in a standing posture. **Sambantha Vinayagar** (Ganesa), is located to the north of the flagstaff and the Bali Petam or the platform for sacrifices. To the south of the thousand-pillared hall, there is a shrine for Subramanya (Kartikeya) and a large tank. Pathala Lingam (the underground Lingam), is the place where Ramana Maharishi (1879-1950 CE) is believed to have performed his penance. The shrine of Sivagangai Vinayagar (Ganesa) is present in the northern bank of the Sivagangai tank.

Halls

The temple complex houses many halls, the most notable being the thousand-pillared hall built during the **Vijayanagara** period. There is a sixteen-pillared Deepa Dharshana Mandapam or the Hall of Light, in the third precinct. The temple tree, **Magizha**, and is considered sacred and medicinal. Childless couples tie small cradles to its branches in obeisance. Vedas write that the mast of the temple separated the earth and the sky during the creation of the universe. The **Kalyana Mandapam**, the marriage hall, is in the south-west precinct and was built in Vijayanagara style. A stone trident is present in the outer shrine of the temple in open air, and has protective railings like a sacred tree. The **Vasantha Mandapam** (Hall of Spring), is in the third precinct and contains the temple office and Kalahasteswarar shrine. The fourth precinct has an image of Nandi, **Brahma Theertham**, the temple tank, the Yanai **Thirai Konda Vinayaga** Shrine, and a hall with six-foot tall statue of Nandi, created by **Vallala Maharaja**.

Inside the doorway of the first tower and the fifth precinct, there is a thousand-pillared hall built during the Vijayanagara period. **Krishnadevaraya** constructed the hall and dug the tank opposite to it. The pillars in the hall are carved with the images of Vali, a mythological beast with the body of a lion and the head of an elephant, a symbol of Nayak power. The **Arunagirinathar Mandapam** is located to the right of the **Kalyana Linga Sundara Eswara Mandapam**, and the **Gopurathilayanar** shrine is to the left of a broad flight of stone stairs which lead up to the **Vallala Gopuram**.

LEGENDS

According to Hindu mythology, Goddess Parvati, the wife of Lord Siva, once closed the eyes of her husband Lord Siva playfully in a flower garden at their abode atop **Mount Kailas**. Although only a moment for the Gods, all light were taken away from the universe and the earth in turn was submerged into darkness for years. Parvati performed penance along with other devotees of Siva. Then Lord Siva appeared as a huge column of fire at the top of **Annamalai Hills**, returning light to the world. Lord Siva then merged with Parvati to form **Ardhanarisvara**, the half-female, half-



male form of Siva. The Arunachala or the red mountain, lies behind the Arunachaleswara temple, and is associated with the temple of its namesake. The hill itself is sacred and considered a lingam, or an iconic representation of Lord Siva.

According to another legend, once while Vishnu and Brahma contested for superiority, Siva appeared as a flame and challenged them to find its source. Brahma took the form of a **swan** and flew to the sky to see the top of the flame, while Vishnu became the **boar** Varaha and sought its base. The scene is called **Lingodbhava** and is represented in the western wall at the sanctum of most Siva temples. Neither Brahma nor Vishnu could find the source.

SAINTS AND LITERARY MENTION

Thirugnana Sambandar, a 7th century Tamil Saivite poet venerated Arunachaleswara and Unnamalai Amman in ten verses in **Tevaram**, compiled as the **First Thirumurai**. **Appar**, a contemporary of Sambandar, also venerated Arunachaleswara in ten verses in **Tevaram**, compiled as the **Fifth Thirumarai**. As the temple is revered in **Tevaram**, it is classified as **Paadal Petra Sthalam**, one of the 276 temples that find mention in the Saiva canon.

Manickavasagar, a 9th century Tamil saint and poet, revered Arunachaleswara in his writing, describing the deity as Annamalai. He composed the **Thiruvempavai** in the Tamil month of **Margazhi** at this temple. **Arunagirinathar** was a 15th century Tamil poet born in Thiruvannamalai. He spent his early years as a rioter and seducer of women. After ruining his health, he tried to commit suicide by throwing himself from the northern tower, but was saved by the grace of Lord Muruga. He then became a staunch devotee of Lord Muruga and composed hymns in Tamil glorifying Murugan, the most notable being **Thruppugazh**.

The western world learnt of Thiruvannamalai during the mid-20th century, through the works of **Sri Ramana Maharishi** (1879-1950). The cave where Ramana Maharishi meditated is on the lower slopes of the Arunachala Hills, with the Ashram further down at the foothills. The basement of the raised hall inside the temple has the **Patala Lingam**, where Ramana Maharishi attained Supreme awareness while ants devoured his flesh. The place is also called a Mukthi Sthalam, meaning place of salvation and saints like Seshadri Swamigal, Gugai Namachivayar and Yogi Ramsurat Kumar have been associated with this temple.



FEATURE & OP-ED



RESUSCITATING COMMON SENSE: A REALITY OR A FUTILITY TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

By Ariaratnam Gobikrishna

Buddha statues, carved out of rock, stood so majestic and in repose; pillars of ornate carvings and stone inscriptions stood the test of time; Stupas patinaed with green moss mingled with Hindu temples; Moonstones and guard stones ushered into roofless cloisters—it was a grand tableau, displaying the glorious Buddhist past of Polonnaruwa. The temple troop macaques were all over, discriminating none. As a boy from Jaffna, during my school excursions, I used to be impartial too, succumbing to the awe and tranquility of the Buddhist sacred sites, but this time I felt different...not in terms of reverence

and tranquility—that, I think, will never change—but I was skeptical...skeptical about taking things at face value. With that mindset, I meandered through the artifacts with the government

designated tour guide who took me to the next rock carving—the statue of the great King Parakramabahu I,...a bare-bodied pot-bellied man holding palm-leaf manuscripts. That must have done it, I suppose, because my skeptical antenna wouldn't stop firing from then on.

Next, we spent some time in front of a temple—listening to our guide's description—that it was supposedly shaped after the Buddhist temples of Cambodia that made me think about my guided tour of Angkor Wat. What a contrast: Cambodia...a distant

land, people of different physical traits, yet the maritime cultural exchange and commerce had transplanted a Hindu culture that flourished before being transformed by the late arrival of Buddhism. The history was cogent and free-flowing, not omitting the influences from the Tamil Pallava and the Chola Kingdoms, and also the taboo elements of religious conflicts and usurpations. Conversion of Buddhist temples in India or Churches in Turkey or Mosques in Spain is no secret to the world history. But in Polonnaruwa facts were shrouded in secrecy: no word of Cholas who inaugurated and ruled Polonnaruwa for 53 years. None whatsoever about Hinduism or Tamil. Mind you, this was when one of the longest dynasties in history had reached its pinnacle—the Emperor Rajendra Chola's reign. The largest navy of the time conquering distant lands in the far east; the largest standing army controlling most of India; The engineering marvels of ship building, irrigation, and warfare. And of course, bringing the whole island of Sri Lanka under one rule.

At the end of our tour my curiosity got the better of me so I had this dialogue with the tour guide, that I'm paraphrasing.

"I thought the Cambodian Kings were Hindus before they became Buddhists" I asked.

"I don't think so...I'm not sure"

"How about Hinduism during Polanaruva period" I asked.

"It was always a part of Buddhism, ever since it came from North India" he said.

"Any impact from Tamil invasions"

"very minimal...because those were always small incursions, easily repulsed" "I see a lot of Tamil words in Sinhala" I asked.

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“You will also see a lot of Portuguese words in Sinhala “ he said.

“You said there was no significant influx from Tamil Nadu, so...how did that happen?” I asked. “Oh!, Sinhalese kings sometimes married Tamil Princesses; that had some influence “ “ Based on your evidence, when do you think the Tamils came to Sri Lanka?” I asked.

“During the Dutch time “ he said.

“Really?”

“No doubt, we have evidence“ he said.

Our guide was extremely courteous, delivered what he believed to be true facts and it was up to me to do factcheck and come to plausible conclusions and that’s exactly what I set out to do.

The next stop was Anuradhapura: The silhouette of the glowing white Ruwanwelisaya loomed under the midday sun that was punctuated by the movement of antlike figures. As the scene got magnified, it revealed that it was a Buddhist procession and its frontline comprised of a retinue of drummers—in Tamil we call “Parai”; it is an old Tamil tradition...fell out of favor in Temples and is now mostly confined to funerals. As I watched the drummers pass by, I couldn’t help wondering whether this was one of many hushed up ”missing“ links. Then I wandered into a Temple, where I saw this dramatic scene: the battle between Dutugemunu and Elara ... Dutugemunu was portrayed as white and Elara black. That scene jolted my memory to an earlier incident, decades ago, at Peradeniya University. There, on many occasions, I was told that I looked Sinhalese. And one day I asked a fellow Sinhalese student what it meant, and he said that the Sinhalese race was light-skinned because their ancestors came from North India and the Tamils were very dark because they were from Tamil Nadu. I’m yet to find evidence to substantiate this claim on skin color and every time I watch our cricket team—that I’ve been doing for the past four decades—I’m convinced otherwise. While ruminating about the skin color, the nearby Isurumuniya sculptures stared back at me the same way Mahabalipuram Pallava sculptures did—the men with threads crossing their bare bodies over left shoulders whispered a Hindu origin and the name Ishvara Muni.

The train journey from Colombo to Galle was wonderful. My wife and I were on the way to the literary festival. Taking a stroll inside Galle Fort was even more exhilarating. As we sauntered, I remembered reading about the missing fifth Shiva Temple of Galle, mentioned by many including Hindu Saints from Tamilakam, Ibn Battuta and Zheng He. I also remembered that Zheng He had made an offering to one of its deities and later with the arrival of the Portuguese the Temple complex was sacked. Coincidentally, Zheng He was being discussed in the media at that time. “Why was there a renewed interest in Zheng He whom we never heard about in our school history books?”, I

wondered.

It was after the end of civil war. Optimism and jubilation were aplenty. So were Chinese investments—and the responsibility of singing their praises. And Zheng He’s visit to the island in 1409 was being compared against the “largesse” pouring down from China. Zheng He’s visit could not have been described in a vacuum so one of two indelible events—the gifting of “Trilingual Plate of Galle”, and the deposing of the Kotte King—was briefly mentioned. Naturally the next question was “what is “Trilingual Plate of Galle”?”

To answer that question, I made a visit to the Colombo Museum. And, soon enough, I too stumbled on the same question that was being debated in the media. Before going further, let me tell you about the “Trilingual plate of Galle” The plate has inscriptions in three languages, namely, Mandarin, Persian and Tamil, as an offering by Zheng He to the three Gods—Buddha, Allah and Vishnu—for the safe voyage. The hot topic of the moment was about the omission of Sinhala. One explanation given by the Chairman of Sri Lankan Tourism Board was that the languages might have been chosen due to their popularity among the travelers of the time. Another, from an Army personnel, that it could have been a genuine mistake—fair enough—and he then went onto conflate a recent incident that involved an omission of Tamil in name boards. My take on this is very simple.

The major rulers of the region of that time were Buddhist Ming Empire, Islamic Delhi Sultanate and Hindu South Indian Dynasties. And the King, Zheng He had deposed, was Vira Alekeswara—a descendant from Tamil Gampola kingdom of Alagakkonara of Kanchipuram—who ruled as a Buddhist king, Vijayabahu IV. His clan had established Kotte kingdom, naming “Kotte” after a Tamil word for fort. So, for obvious reasons, Zheng He must have chosen the dominant court languages of the respective kingdoms. Otherwise, being a Muslim himself and fluent in Arabic, he would have chosen Arabic instead of Persian. (the dominant court language of the Indian Islamic empires was Persian) The Hindu God, to whom the offering was given in Tamil, was Tenavarai Nayanar, the Vishnu deity of the famed Temple complex of Galle, that had been recognized by many foreigners. The Tamil words describing the Gods, the Temples and the area are all denoting to mostly one thing — the Southern tip of the island, that later got corrupted by the invading Portuguese as Dondra. (Thenthurai)

We were in Kandy, the heart and soul of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It drizzled when we stood in line to visit Sri Dalada Maligawa. While waiting, I thought about the long uninterrupted Kandyan heritage. “What made Kandy the last bastion against the European invasion—not one, but two—since 1505 until the overthrow of Sri

The train journey from Colombo to Galle was wonderful. My wife and I were on the way to the literary festival. Taking a stroll inside Galle Fort was even more exhilarating. As we sauntered, I remembered reading about the missing fifth Shiva Temple of Galle, mentioned by many including Hindu Saints from Tamilakam, Ibn Battuta and Zheng He.



FEATURE & OP-ED

Vikrama Rajasinha by the British in 1815”? I wondered. “How come, while rest of the country was undergoing Christianization, Theravatha Buddhism was kept unmolested in Kandy”? I queried. Quickly, I was able

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Kandyan Buddhist Kingdom was preserved and protected by the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

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to glean through the information that was public knowledge, and it was none other than the constant supply of nobility and warriors

from Tamil and Nayaka Dynasties of Tamilakam, under whose leadership it was made possible. And as a consequence—no surprise—the court languages of the Kandyan Kingdom were Tamil and Sinhala. In other words, the Kandyan Buddhist Kingdom was preserved and protected by the Sinhalese and the Tamils. If you need a third party to confirm the fact that disparate communities lived together under a Tamil ruler, let’s bring this interesting figure, Robert Knox—the prototype(partially)for the famous figure in literature—Robinson Crusoe. Robert Knox spent 20 years in Kandy in captivity under Rajasinha II. So, naturally, he became fluent in Sinhala; so, did Rajasinha II, a Tamil Kandyan King of Thanjavur Nayaka kingdom who had embraced Sinhala Buddhism as many of his predecessors did while being married to a Hindu Tamil as many of his predecessors were. (the practice goes back to Mahavamsa period) Robert Knox somehow escaped from Kandy, and with the help of the Dutch, went back to London. There he wrote a bestseller, in which he talked about Chingulays (Sinhalese),Malabars (Tamils) and Moors(Muslims) in Kandy. He also talked about his inability to communicate, on his escape through Anuradhapura, because the language spoken there was Tamil.

I was back in my hometown, Jaffna. And the Buddhist site near Kantharodei was on my mind, that I had frequented as a boy. But things were not the same when I visited recently. Kathrugoda Ancient Viharaya, as it’s known now, had an army sentry along with information that I was ignorant about.

The current narrative about the archaeological site states that Buddhism came to Jaffna from Anuradhapura and the towns it flourished in Jaffna were all Sinhalese and the subsequent Tamil intrusion not only erased its existence but corrupted the village names by Tamilization. The Sinhalese historians cite Devanampiya Tissa’s conversion to Buddhism and three visits of Lord Buddha to the island, recorded in Mahavamsa, as evidence. First of all, there was no Sinhala language during Devanampiya Tisa’s period. And,secondly, the visit of Buddha to Manipallavam island(Sri Lanka) to diffuse a dispute is the main theme of Manimekalai—one of 5 great Tamil Epics (the remaining 4 Epics are steeped in Jainism and Buddhism as well)—written by Chithalai

Satthanar ... a Tamil Buddhist monk who lived in Tamilakam. It’s common knowledge that Buddhism existed in Northern Sri Lanka but unfortunately it met the same fate as in South India when Hindu revival took the upper hand. And South India, for that matter, is studded with places of Buddhist worship and excavation sites as evidence in plain sight. Places like Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh; Kanchipuram,

Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu; and Muziris in Kerala are well known for their storied Buddhist past. As a matter of fact, the Chinese President Xi Jinping’s recent visit to Mahabalipuram reinforces the importance of Kanchipuram and its port vis-a’-vis the ancient maritime cultural exchange between China and Tamilakam and that includes the many famous Buddhist scholars as well. If Buddhism could have gone to faraway places from Kanchipuram it certainly could have come to Jaffna. In fact the travel routes of many Buddhist scholars originated from Kanchipuram to many faraway destinations including China, Japan and Indonesia and the scholars Vajrabodhi’s and Buddhaghosa’s certainly coursed through Sri Lanka, leaving everlasting impact. Consequently, Tamils were Buddhists and Jains in Jaffna, but during the height of Bhakti movement, converted back to Hinduism and later during Portuguese period to Catholicism and even later during Dutch period back to Hinduism or to Protestantism. (Prime Minister Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike’s ancestry is a microcosm of this Sri Lankan social evolution) For Sinhalese and Tamils alike, language had no sway over what religion they followed in a given time.

Furthermore, I also delved into the facts pertaining to the demise of Buddhism and Jainism in Tamil Nadu and Northern Sri Lanka during the Bhakti movement of Saivism and Vaishnavam. Jainism and Buddhism at their initial stages proposed renunciation practices, namely, food donation for the poor, refuge for the helpless, education for the masses and medical assistance for the public. They were against the deep-rooted caste system. (All good stuff) They were very popular among the masses for obvious reasons and also for the clever usage of the Tamil language (origin of great Tamil epics) as opposed to Sanskrit, the liturgical language of Hindu priestly class. But the ascetics were relentless in keeping the practices—and the public, over time, found them too rigid and difficult to keep. And also, they didn’t sit well with the rulers and the upper echelon. So the upcoming Bhakti movement swept across easily, swaying the rulers first and the disgruntled public later, and also by weaponizing Tamil in public debates, (a short lull from Sanskrit) and as an unintended consequence, we are left with some of the best Tamil poetry and literature. I have a hunch that this must have pushed the ardent Tamil Buddhists towards Anuradhapura to stay away from Hinduism and the newly minted flowery Tamil in particular—and the rest is history.

Basically, what I have tried to do, so far, through the examples of my recent travels, is that I have highlighted the obvious contradictions in our shared history. My intension is not to favor one community over the other, but to create a paradigm shift in our thought process. To see what the picture will look like if we—both the majority and the minorities— view it through unbiased lens. So, I think, if you look at the history through unbiased lens you will see a clear picture. A picture of two large groups evolving from waves of migration—mostly from South India—slowly turning into a Buddhist predominance from an initial Hindu-Buddhist codominance; likewise, turning into a Sinhala predominance from Tamil-Sinhala codominance. It must have been a slow process, going back and forth, over many centuries like what took place in the formation of

Kerala, but preferring Buddhism. Time and again, the Tamil Kings seemed to have adopted not only the names of the nobility but the language and the religion that came with it and large swaths of the population must have followed suit. This phenomenon is well documented during Portuguese period due to its relatively recent history—in relation to the adoption of a new religion. The reasons for adoption would have been many: sometimes of one’s own volition, for example, for the nobility and for the voluntary ethnic/ religious converts. But many a times it would have been by inducements, coercion and by sheer threats to the lives and livelihood.

Having said that, let’s look at the two parallel narratives that had caused this great chasm in the first place and subsequently the bloody civil war. The Sinhalese claim that they’ve inhabited the whole island for at least 2500 years—via continuous migration from North India for two millennia—and somehow, despite their valiant efforts, Tamils have encroached their lands illegally. Their theory, from the outset, allows only Tamil Princesses and their entourage and the children of Emperor Ashoka to disembark at the Northern shores and then continues to restrict, throughout the history, everyone except people of North Indian descent. It also conveniently glosses over all the Tamil Kingdoms that existed from time immemorial, including the ones admitted in Mahavamsa itself. In fact, I was chuckling, while reading some pieces, vehemently arguing for punitive measures against Jaffna Tamils for not preserving Buddhist artifacts, written by Sinhalese who still carry Portuguese names. The Tamils, on the other hand, claim that they are the original inhabitants of the island and the Sinhalese—a race from North India of Indo-Aryan origin—invaded and made them the minority by devious means; so, with the help of Tamil Nadu, they should carve out at least 1/3 of the island for Eelam. They also feel that they, with their relatively large population in the world, deserve a country of their own. Their slogan is “Is it wrong to think that once mighty rulers, always rulers?”. Due to these deeply rooted convictions, both communities refuse to even entertain the possibility that all these different communities, existing now, could have evolved from one another.

So, as an effort to break the stalemate, I thought, we should bring science to the rescue—the DNA analysis in particular. But unfortunately, we have very few studies, mostly done by Sri Lankans, that hover over the theory of origin—the arrival of Prince Vijaya from Northwestern India. So I searched for an independent study that dealt with the reality on the ground, namely, the magnitude of shared genetic footprint among current populations inside and outside of Sri Lanka. And I found one that was surprisingly popular among the Sri Lankan media as well. It was done by Professor Gautam Kumar Kshatriya of the University of Delhi.

What his study revealed is very interesting, so I reproduce the results verbatim to avoid being accused of spinning the facts. It states that the present-day Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lanka are closer to Indian Tamils and South Indian Muslims. They are farthest from Veddahs and quite distant from Gujaratis and Punjabis of northwest India and Bengalis of northeast India. The study of genetic admixture revealed that the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka have a higher contribution from the Tamils of southern India (69.86% ± 0.61) compared with the Bengalis of northeast India (25.41% ± 0.51),

whereas the Tamils of Sri Lanka have received a higher contribution from the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka (55.20% ± 9.47) compared with the Tamils of India (16.63% ± 8.73). Similarly, the Bengali contribution is 28.17% and that of the Indian Tamils is 16.63%.

In conclusion, the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka were the Veddahs, who have had little admixture with the Sinhalese and possibly none with the Tamils. The Veddahs are distinct because they were confined to inhospitable dry zones and were hardly influenced by the neighboring inhabitants. Furthermore, the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils are an admixed population genetically. The Sinhalese, who first came from northwest India under the leadership of Prince Vijaya in 543 B.C., have received and exchanged a substantial amount of their genes with the populations of northeastern and southern India. The Sinhalese and the Tamils have no contribution from the population groups of northwest India. In fact, the contribution made by Prince Vijaya and his small band of 700 companions to the original pool of the Sinhalese must have been eliminated by the long-standing contribution (over 2000 years) of the population groups of northeastern and southern India.

I thought the matter is settled once and for all because the results and the analysis not only answer the perennial question unequivocally, but also jibe with common sense. “Oh boy!, I couldn’t have been more wrong”. Not that the study was ignored—on the contrary, the Sinhalese literati paid so much attention and praise but at the end the only thing that was visible to their eyes was the Bengali contribution. As usual they picked and chose what suited for their narrative, but this time they latched onto the maternal side story of Prince Vijaya from Bengal in lieu of the Northwestern origin. The Tamils were silent about the Sinhalese and the Bengali contributions as well. The message though was loud and clear: despite our bloody recent past, each community, particularly the majority, is gung ho on delegitimizing the other at any cost. The majority Sinhalese will take anything but Tamil from South India as their true origin and the minority Tamils won’t take anything but Tamil from South India—from whom they have become genetically distant. So, in this milieu, even the science can’t come to the rescue. Unless people are willing to see the truth as is and the destruction it wrought for not doing so, nothing can sway them towards reality—they will always remain in the clouds of their hopeless fantasies.

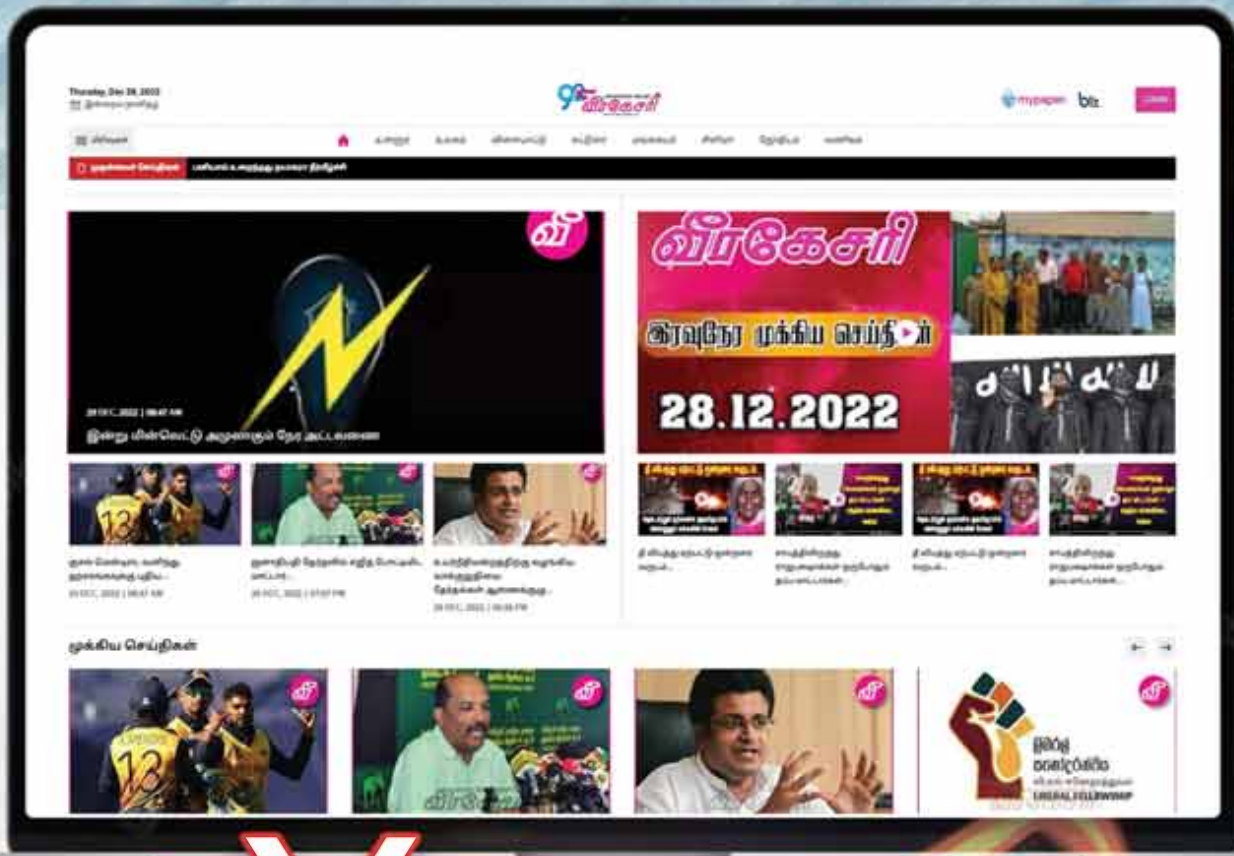
Sadly, that is the final word.

The study of genetic admixture revealed that the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka have a higher contribution from the Tamils of southern India (69.86% ± 0.61) compared with the Bengalis of northeast India (25.41% ± 0.51), whereas the Tamils of Sri Lanka have received a higher contribution from the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka (55.20% ± 9.47) compared with the Tamils of India (16.63% ± 8.73). Similarly, the Bengali contribution is 28.17% and that of the Indian Tamils is 16.63%.

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