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NAVIGATING THROUGH THE CURRENT CANADIAN POLITICAL NOISE IN THE NEW YEAR 2025

By Harrish Thirukumaran

Trudeau resigns and new Liberal leadership race

“This country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it’s become clear to me that if I’m having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election.” “I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered a somber outlook, as he announced to reporters on January 6, 2025, that he is resigning as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and Prime Minister. Both

decisions will take place after the results of a leadership race. It is an explosive political start to the New Year.

This emerged nearly three weeks after his finance minister, Chrystia Freeland abruptly resigned from her post over Trudeau’s approach to President-elect Donald Trump’s threat of tariffs. This day marks a rough end of a nine-yearlong political run that includes the COVID-19 pandemic response as well as climate change policy. It surprisingly concludes a story from two previous issues of the Monsoon on the recent situation. Additionally, Trudeau has requested the Governor General, Mary Simon to prorogue parliament until March 24. In terms of a leadership election within the Liberal Party of Canada, Trudeau called on the president of the Liberal Party of Canada to start a “robust” and “nationwide” process to find the next leader. Some front running contenders already being reported include his former finance minister and deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland and former Bank of Canada governor, Mark Carney. The Liberal leadership race is set for March 9, with candidates having until January 23 to declare their entry to participate. Reports now indicate that Carney could be announcing his candidacy by the week of January 13



Canadian Prime Minister Hon. Justin Trudeau

along with Freeland. As part of the rules for this contest, both Canadian citizens and permanent residents are eligible to vote in the contest for the leader.

Diving into the latest on Canadian politics

There is a lot of noise ramping up in the Canadian political landscape. As Harold Wilson, former UK prime minister, once noted, a week in politics is a long time. Indeed, that it is, and we are seeing it play out in real time here in Canada so this piece intends to ensure you can grasp fully its implications.

To start, Canadians should expect the upcoming election season even sooner than the scheduled October date. Semra Sevi, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Toronto, told NPR that “An election could be called as early as late March 2025.”

Continued to Page 4 in Publisher’s Desk....

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PUBLISHER'S DESK

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Navigating Through the Current Canadian Political Noise in the New Year 2025

By Harrish Thirukumaran

Pierre Polievre, Canada's next possible prime minister

According to CBC's Poll Tracker, the Conservative Party of Canada leads by 24 points compared to the ruling

Liberal Party. Currently led by Pierre Polievre, he has become widely known for his attack dog style of opposition politics in the House of Commons. He has called Trudeau a "wacko" in the House as well as his ministers, "disastrous". These have blurred the rules of Canadian parliamentary debate along the way.

His biggest message to appeal to the voters: Do away with the "grandiosity" and "utopian wokeism" that he believes represents Trudeau, in favour of the "the things that are grand and great about the common people".

This style has and continues to resonate with the voter base, focusing on issues such as cost of living in terms of housing costs and inflation as well as immigration.

While Canadians have been open to the opposition leader's message as a change from Trudeau's brand of progressive politics and favour the Conservatives, just over half of them hold an unfavourable opinion of him, according to the latest polls released from the Angus Reid Institute.

One sticking point is the carbon tax. Polievre has mainly criticized Trudeau for his policy approach to climate change. His government's carbon tax policy, he argues, has caused a great deal of financial burden on Canadians. He even asserts that this next election will be about the carbon tax, despite the recent rumblings emerging about the Canada-US relationship due to President-elect Donald Trump's threat of tariffs of 25% on Canadian goods and services.

Today's issues:

Carbon tax

Despite all the political sloganeering, there are facts that need to be noted to assist the voters like you. For example, the carbon tax has had a relatively modest impact on inflation according to a study at the University of Calgary, examining its effects from 2019 to 2024.

Inflation

Next, it is worth noting that the Bank of Canada in a December 2024 press release, stated that its monetary policy has been decisive in lowering inflation recently to its 2% target. However, it could not control external factors like global supply chain strains. Furthermore, it required Canadian families and businesses taking on higher interest payments on loans like mortgages.

That paired with higher prices on some essential goods like \$8 lettuce could have together contributed to higher disapproval in Trudeau's government, as the former PM himself noted to CNN in a recent interview. The feelings around inflation did not entirely match up with the hard facts on the matter in terms of numbers compared with other countries such as US and Spain. In those sorts of situations, Trudeau points out, someone has to take the blame, which are typically the incumbents.

Furthermore, he went on to say in that same interview that the recent statements by President-elect Trump on Canada being a '51st state' could be a distraction on the expensive impacts that his 25% tariffs would have on people and businesses on both sides of the border. Trump even broadly proclaimed that Canada would be annexed by 'economic force'.

On the tariff issue, Polievre said his party, if given the chance to govern would "stand up and we will state clearly that Canada

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is a sovereign and independent country, that we will protect our integrity as a nation through strength."

Immigration:

The large numbers of immigrants that were being admitted under Trudeau's government, a claimed boost to a post-COVID economy have put a strain on housing affordability and inflation as some have been voicing disapproval of his government.

Conclusion:

In going through the news cycle and recent commentary on these issues, it important to note that multiple factors and dynamics have played a role in Trudeau's ultimate decision to resign, and not a single issue per se.

However, it is safe to note that the cost of living, housing, immigration and climate change will be some of the most pressing issues that are top of mind for the voters in this upcoming election. The developments occurring in Canadian politics today are incredibly fast paced right now. As mentioned earlier, a week is a long time in politics. This idea is magnified further in today's world of social media. In that sense, I would suggest that readers stay up to date on these developments through reputable sources of information such as CBC, Toronto Star, or the New York Times as well as the official websites of the contesting parties. Observe from a place of curiosity and critical thinking to understand how Canada can move forward as a prosperous country for all.

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

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Statement by Minister Khera on Tamil Heritage Month



Hon. Minister Kamal Khera



Today, we join Tamil communities across Canada in celebrating the start of Tamil Heritage Month.

The first Tamils arrived in Canada in 1983, through government measures and policies aimed at helping people flee the decades-long armed conflict in Sri Lanka. For more than 40 years, Tamil communities have helped build the Canada we know today through

their courage and social commitment. From politics and health care to entrepreneurship and the arts, Tamil communities continue to enrich our society with their excellence and resilience.

As we celebrate this month, we must also remember that people of Tamil descent still face many systemic barriers. To that end, we recently launched the

first-ever Action Plan on Combatting Hate and anti-racism strategy to address these barriers. Throughout this month, I invite Canadians from coast to coast to join in the celebrations and learn more about the heritage of Tamil communities here in Canada and around the world.

I wish everyone celebrating a very happy Thai Pongal and Happy Tamil Heritage Month!

Government of Canada announces extension of 2024 charitable donations to February 28, 2025

December 30, 2024 - Ottawa, Ontario - Department of Finance Canada

Today, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs, along with the Honourable Élisabeth Brière, Minister of National Revenue, announced that the federal government intends to amend the Income Tax Act to extend the deadline for making donations eligible for tax support in the 2024 tax year, until February 28, 2025.

Canada's charities work tirelessly to address poverty and hunger, improve socioeconomic outcomes for Canadians, and keep communities connected and informed. Many charities depend on the generous donations of Canadians and businesses, particularly during the holiday season, to carry out this valuable work.

This extension will mitigate the impacts of the four-week Canada Post mail stoppage by providing donors with sufficient time to ensure their contributions are received and processed, helping charities ensure they can deliver vital services to the communities that depend on them.

The government will introduce legislation effecting these changes once Parliament returns in the new year.

Quotes

"Charities are at the heart of communities across Canada, lending a helping hand to those in need. This extension recognizes the impact that the Canada Post service disruption had on their fundraising campaigns, and will give charities additional time to receive and process donations so that they can continue their vital work."

- **The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc**
Minister of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs

"Registered charities play an important role in our society and provide valuable services to Canadians—especially the most vulnerable among us. The Government of Canada is dedicated to the strength and vitality of charities, as we know these organizations are important to the social fabric of Canada and the well-being of Canadians."

- **The Honourable Élisabeth Brière**
Minister of National Revenue



Government
of Canada

Extension of 2024 charitable donations
until February 28, 2025

Quick facts

- There are approximately 86,000 registered charities in Canada, each carrying out activities in support of one or more of the four recognized categories of charity—the relief of poverty, advancement of education, advancement of religion, and other purposes beneficial to the community.
- The Government of Canada understands that registered charities are an important part of Canadian society, and it encourages Canadians to donate generously through the Charitable Donation Tax Credit for individuals and the deduction for charitable donations for corporations.
- Federal tax assistance for donations to charities and other qualified donees is projected to be almost \$5 billion for 2024.



Government of Canada announces border security exercises with provinces and territories, starting with Ontario

● January 3, 2025 – Toronto, Ontario



The Government of Canada continues to take concrete action to strengthen border security, collaborating closely with provincial, territorial and U.S. partners to keep communities on both sides of the border safe.

Today, the Honourable David McGuinty, Minister of Public Safety, announced the launch of a series of Government of Canada-led exercises with provincial and territorial governments designed to further strengthen our ability to take action and respond to events at the border. The first exercise was held today with the government of Ontario.

As part of a Team Canada approach, senior officials from federal organizations responsible for border security, including the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Public Safety Canada (PS), and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), met with their Ontario counterparts to discuss how to best prepare for and respond to potential situations that might arise on either side of the Canada-U.S. border.

The goal of these exercises is to assess preparedness, test coordination, determine adequacy of resources and ensure effective inter-agency communication and federal-provincial-territorial coordination for whatever scenarios may come our way. These collaborative exercises with provinces and territories are strengthening our posture and refining and enhancing the systems in place to stay ahead of evolving challenges to ensure the border remains secure.

These exercises build on Canada's Border Plan, a \$1.3 billion investment to support a robust, enforcement-focused posture at the border that will include the deployment of helicopters, drones, mobile surveillance towers, and officers with new canine teams.

The CBSA and the RCMP play a crucial role protecting our communities by preventing illegal goods and inadmissible people from entering Canada. They are in constant operational contact with their U.S. partners and have contingency plans in place while procuring additional technology, equipment and surveillance means to multiply the existing resources at the border.

Quotes

“Strengthening border security requires all of us to take a Team Canada approach – and this series of exercises with our provincial and territorial partners seek to do just that. Through their professionalism and dedication, Canada’s law enforcement agencies are prepared to respond to any scenario at our border.”

- The Honourable David J. McGuinty, Minister of Public Safety

“Partnerships are essential to border integrity and the enforcement of Canadian laws. The type of training conducted today helps to ensure that any response to potential border-related contingencies will be well coordinated. The RCMP and its partners will continue to use a multi-layered approach to securing the border and the coastline by using personnel, technology, and intelligence.”

- **Mike Duheme**
RCMP Commissioner

“The Canada Border Services Agency benefits from collaboration in maintaining border operations and security. We have already begun to implement changes to increase our capacity and initiated work to strengthen our collaboration with federal and provincial partners in support of Canada’s Border Plan. We have increased our monitoring and reporting activities as well as practiced our contingency plans. With our American partners, building on the recent decision to align hours of service with U.S. Customs and Border Protection at more than 30 locations, last week flagpoling was ended eliminating a major irritant to both countries and this week we announced a planned land border preclearance project in the United States.”

- **Ted Gallivan**
Executive Vice-President,
Canada Border Services Agency

“Working with our federal partners, we are securing our shared border and keeping streets across Ontario and Canada safe. Through launching this inaugural readiness exercise, we are stepping up and showing that our province is prepared to work with all partners to protect our communities.”

- **The Honourable Michael S. Kerzner**,
Solicitor General of Ontario

Quick facts

- Budget 2024 provided \$743.5 million over five years, including \$159.5 million ongoing, to support the stability and integrity of Canada’s asylum system, increasing processing and decision-making capacity.
- Since implementing a partial visa requirement for Mexican nationals in February 2024, Canada has seen a significant decrease in asylum claims from Mexican nationals. The average claims per month dropped from 2,068 during the eight months before the visa imposition to 541 in the eight months after the visa imposition.
- The Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) has been in effect since 2004 and is an important tool for Canada and the U.S. to work together on the orderly management of asylum claims made in our countries. In March 2023, the STCA was expanded to apply across the entire Canada-U.S. land border, including internal waterways, such as the Great Lakes.
- Health Canada’s new Canadian Drug Profiling Centre will complement existing laboratory capacity by allowing for more specialized analysis of synthetic drug samples. Analysis will go beyond identifying the components of a sample, and look at markers to help determine where substances were manufactured.
- Health Canada’s new Precursor Risk Management Unit will increase oversight over precursor chemicals and monitor emerging illegal drug trends.
- As announced by the Government of Canada as part of Canada’s Border Plan, work and study permits will no longer be provided to flagpolers at a port of entry, further streamlining activities and allowing Canadian and American border officers to focus on border enforcement.
- The CBSA announced its intention to launch its first preclearance operation in 2025. Preclearance supports the national security and economic prosperity of both Canada and the U.S. by facilitating the secure and efficient movement of people and goods across the border.

MAHAJANA COLLEGE OLD STUDENTS ASSOCIATION - CANADA ANNOUNCES 17TH ANNUAL MAHAJANAN CONTEST



The Mahajana College Old Students Association (OSA) - Canada is pleased to announce the 17th Annual Mahajanan Contest, scheduled for Sunday, March 2, 2025. This esteemed competition focuses on Mathematics and General Knowledge, targeting students from Grades 1 through 11. Event Details:

Date: Sunday, March 2, 2025

Subjects:

Mathematics and General Knowledge

Eligible Grades:

1 to 11

Registration Opens:

January 1, 2025

Prizes for Top Ten Participants:

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Organized annually by the Mahajana College OSA - Canada, the event has a rich history of encouraging young minds to engage in scholarly pursuits. This year's contest will be conducted at the following eight locations:

- GTA - Central (Scarborough)
- GTA West (Mississauga)
- GTA – East (Ajax)
- GTA- North (Richmond Hill)
- Waterloo
- Cornwall
- Ottawa
- Montreal

Participants will be evaluated on their proficiency in Mathematics and General Knowledge, with the top students receiving prestigious

awards, including laptops, medals, and certificates. This initiative aims to motivate students to excel academically and develop a passion for lifelong learning.

Registration for the contest begins on January 1, 2025. Interested participants can register through the official websites: www.mahajana.ca

The Mahajana College Old Students Association - Canada is dedicated to fostering educational opportunities and community engagement.

Through events like the Mahajanan Contest, the association continues to support the academic growth and development of students across the region.

For further inquiries, please contact the organizing committee at contest@mahajanan.org

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Biden's top aide to make China-focused visit to India



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan in New Delhi, June 17, 2024.

Sullivan will visit India next week to emphasize U.S.-India ties, the White House said Jan. 3, 2024. (*Indian prime minister's office via AP*)

President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, will make his final visit to India next week to emphasize Washington's partnership with New Delhi, the White House announced Friday.

The visit will cap the Biden administration's efforts to maximize ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, in its strategic focus to counter China's influence in the Indo-Pacific.

Strengthening ties with India has been a "real foreign policy priority and area of legacy achievement for the Biden administration," a senior administration official said on condition of anonymity in a briefing to reporters Friday.

Sullivan will visit New Delhi January 5-6 to discuss a range of issues, including civil nuclear partnership, China's overcapacity on semiconductor and biopharma supply chains, strategic technology cooperation and other shared security priorities, a second administration official said.

Sullivan's visit comes as tension is brewing between India and China over Beijing's plan to build what it calls the "world's largest" hydro dam on the Yarlung Zangbo River on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau, which could affect millions downstream in India and Bangladesh.

Sullivan is expected to discuss the dam along with other regional issues of concern,

said the first administration official in response to VOA's question. "What matters to us is that when it comes to water resources that have to be managed across countries, that those are being handled fairly and in an equitable way," the official said.

Technology initiative

A key focus of the visit is the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) – an effort that Biden and Modi announced in May 2022 to bolster their strategic technology partnership and defense-industrial cooperation between their governments, businesses and academic institutions across various domains, from AI to quantum computing, and from semiconductors to space.

Sullivan's visit will take place just two weeks before President-elect Donald Trump assumes office January 20. Many expect iCET to continue under his administration.

"There is broad bipartisan support for some of the goals of iCET," said the second administration official in response to VOA's question. They include "strengthening the resilience of technology supply chains, working with allies and partners to position ourselves to offset PRC [People Republic

of China's] advancements in certain technologies, and efforts to dominate some of the supply chains."

The U.S. strategic partnership with New Delhi is "based upon a bet that India's economic, technological and military rise is critical to pushing back and containing China's dominance in these fields," said Aparna Pande, director of the Initiative on the Future of India and South Asia at the Hudson Institute.

Irritants have not derailed bilateral ties. Those include India's democratic backsliding, and the case of a former Indian government employee charged in New York last year with murder-for-hire over his role in directing a foiled plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist and Modi critic.

Most of Biden's policies on India will likely continue, Pande told VOA, as Trump's desire to "push back or contain China's rise – economic, technological and military – will help ensure that India is seen as a partner in this endeavor."

During his first administration, Trump had a warm relationship with Modi. Trump attended a 2019 "Howdy Modi" rally in Texas, and Modi reciprocated by hosting a "Namaste Trump" rally in Ahmedabad in 2020.

- VOA News



25 years after the transfer of the Panama Canal, Panamanians celebrate and reaffirm their sovereignty

This December 31, 2024 marks 25 years since the US handed over the Panama Canal. Panamanians are celebrating by reaffirming that they will not give up control of the important maritime route nor accept external pressures that jeopardize their national independence

Panamanians are celebrating this Tuesday the 25th anniversary of the transfer of the Panama Canal to the nation, after several decades of US administration, with the conviction of guaranteeing its sustainability and the national sovereignty of the important maritime route.

Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino is leading the commemorative events on Tuesday for the anniversary of the historic milestone reached on December 31, 1999, by virtue of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties signed in 1977, the Panamanian presidency reported on its X account.

“[The date] symbolizes the struggle, sacrifice and sovereignty of our nation (...) Today we celebrate a milestone that reaffirms our pride as



A container ship is seen passing through the Cocolí Locks on the Panama Canal, which was expanded in 2016. [Photo: Panama Canal Authority]

a nation. Long live our Canal, long live our flag and long live Panama, always sovereign and master of its destiny!”, Panamanian authorities said in a message on social media.

Under Panamanian control, the canal has become one of the main routes of world trade. For Panamanians, it is also a symbol of national unity and a driving force of their development.

“The Panamanian administration of the Canal has proven to be efficient and committed to excellence, adapting to the demands of international trade and contributing significantly to the economic development of the country,” said Ricaurte Vásquez, administrator of the Panama Canal Authority (ACP), recently, to underline the effort and capacity of Panamanians to manage this work of global relevance.

A bit of history

The United States built the Panama Canal between 1904 and 1914. The US government managed it for several decades. Following several controversies and tensions, anti-US protests arose in 1964 in the area occupied by the canal.

These unrest led to new negotiations on the management of the canal, which ended with the signing of agreements in 1977 between the government of the recently deceased former US president Jimmy Carter and the then Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos.

These treaties established the permanent neutrality of the Panama Canal. Previously, there was a period of joint custody that ended with the US ceding full control to Panama in 2000.

These treaties guaranteed the permanent neutrality of the Panama Canal. After a period of joint custody, the canal passed into Panamanian hands in 1999. Since then, the Panama Canal

Authority has managed this key infrastructure for world trade.

Celebration with nuances of reaffirmation of defense of sovereignty

Panamanians are reaching the historic anniversary amid a recent controversy fueled by statements by US President-elect Donald Trump, who said days ago that he intends to regain control of the Panama Canal, arguing without showing evidence that the nation would be allowing Chinese soldiers to control the maritime route and the alleged collection of high tariffs, which he defined as “exorbitant payments” to US ships.

Trump, who takes office on January 20, has also said that Chinese troops are controlling the canal and has promised that the United States will be given control of the canal “in its entirety, quickly and without question.”

Panama’s response

From the country’s presidency to ordinary Panamanians, the response has been unanimous and forceful. President Mulino has reiterated that there are no Chinese soldiers controlling the maritime route.

“There are no other hands on the Panama Canal, only Panamanian ones. It will remain that way forever,” Mulino said during the commemoration.

This is just one of several statements that point to the same idea of maintaining sovereignty over the canal.

“Every square meter of the canal and its adjacent area belongs to Panama and will continue to be ours,” Mulino said days ago in response to Trump’s statements.

Panamanians like Abel Zeballos, a high school teacher, told the Voice of America: “We are proud that our channel is Panamanian and that it is managed by professionals from various disciplines.”

Abdul Rodriguez, also Panamanian, told VOA that he feels “proud” that the canal is in Panama’s hands. “We are proud to have turned it into a successful enterprise,” he said.

“The Canal is a source of pride for every Panamanian because it represents the efforts of our past generations. The fact that thousands of Panamanians work there today is deeply moving. It is the dream of many families,” said Dalys Lee, business administrator, referring to the social impact of the Panama Canal.

The current successes and challenges of the Panama Canal

Among the recent challenges, the Panama Canal Authority is immersed in generating strategies that allow sustainability and guarantees for water levels that have been impacted in recent times due to factors such as the climate crisis and growing competition in international trade.

However, the Panama Canal Authority maintains that in these 25 years, the achievements have been innumerable. They cite, for example, what they describe as the notable improvement in the operational efficiency of the canal, where the transit time of a ship through the route was significantly reduced, from 33 to 23 hours.



Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino delivers a speech during a ceremony to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the handover of the Panama Interoceanic Canal by the United States to Panama, in Panama City on December 31, 2024.

The expansion of the canal in 2016, financed entirely by Panama, has, according to authorities, consolidated its relevance in international trade, allowing the transit of neopanamax vessels and connecting 144 maritime routes and 1,700 ports in 160 countries.

“The greatest achievement is that the workforce of 8,500 workers has met the goal of being a 100% Panamanian Canal, managed with tremendous efficiency,” says Illya de Marotta, deputy administrator of the ACP.

Could the canal return to US control?

Omar Jaén Suárez, a Panamanian historian who participated in the negotiations for the transfer of the canal to Panama, believes that the administration’s success is unquestionable and he does not believe that a reversal of the measure that was a milestone in 1999 is possible. “These statements by Trump only succeeded in uniting the Panamanian people and reinforced international support for the Canal Neutrality Treaty.”

Referring to Trump’s criticism of the current tariffs for the canal, Suárez said that these transit fees are set in consultation with the international shipping community, prioritizing balance and competitiveness.

The canal treaties were ratified in 1978. In response to a US media report, Trump’s former chief of staff during his previous presidency, Mick Mulvaney, suggested that Trump’s statements were intended to lower the tariffs paid by ships.

“I can’t imagine American soldiers coming in to take back the canal, but you have to think someone is out there scratching their head and thinking, ‘Is Donald Trump crazy enough to do something like this?’” Mulvaney said recently on NewsNation’s The Hill.

The canal has contributed more than 28 billion dollars to the Panamanian state since its transfer 25 years ago, making it not only a pillar of the economy, but also a driving force for the social and logistical development of Panama.

This year alone, the ACP provided the State with more than 2.4 billion dollars. Today, the interoceanic route represents 7.7% of Panama’s Gross Domestic Product.

- VOA News



WORLD NEWS

Jimmy Carter made eradicating Guinea worm disease his mission

Nobel Prize-winning peacemaker Jimmy Carter spent nearly four decades waging war to eliminate an ancient parasite plaguing the world's poorest people. Rarely fatal but searingly painful and debilitating, Guinea worm disease infects people who drink water tainted with larvae that grow inside the body into worms up to 3 feet long. The noodle-thin parasites then burrow their way out, breaking through the skin in burning blisters.

Carter made eradicating Guinea worm a top mission of The Carter Center, the nonprofit he and his wife, Rosalynn Carter, founded after leaving the White House. The former president rallied public health experts, billionaire donors, African heads of state and thousands of volunteer villagers to work toward eliminating a human disease for only the second time in history.

"It'd be the most exciting and gratifying accomplishment of my life," Carter told The Associated Press in 2016. Even after entering home hospice care in February 2023, aides said Carter kept asking for Guinea worm updates.

Carter died Sunday, Dec 29, 2024, at age 100.

Thanks to the Carters' efforts, the worms that afflicted an estimated 3.5 million people in 20 African and Asian countries when the center launched its campaign in 1986 are on the brink of extinction. Only 14 human cases were reported across four African nations in 2023, according to The Carter Center.

The World Health Organization's target for eradication is 2030. Carter Center leaders hope to achieve it sooner.

That meant recently returning to Jarweng, in a remote area of South Sudan in northeastern Africa. The village of 500 people hadn't seen Guinea worm infections since 2014 until Nyingong Aguek and her two sons drank swampy water while traveling in 2022. A fourth person also got infected.

"Having the worm pulled out is more painful than giving birth," said Aguek, pointing to scars where four worms emerged from her left leg.

The center's staff and volunteers walked house to house distributing water filters and teaching people to inspect dogs, which can also carry the parasite.

"If someone's hurt, The Carter Center will help," said villager Mathew Manyiel, listening to a training session while checking his dog for symptoms.

An audacious plan

In the mid-1980s, global health agencies were otherwise occupied, and heads of state largely overlooked the illness afflicting millions of their citizens. Carter was still defining the center's mission when public health experts who had served in his administration approached him with a plan to eliminate the disease.

Only a few years had passed since the WHO declared in 1979 that smallpox was the first human disease to be eradicated worldwide. Guinea worm, the experts told Carter, could become the second.

"President Carter, with a political background, was able to do far more in global health than we could do alone," said Dr. William Foege, who led the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's smallpox eradication program and the CDC itself before becoming The Carter Center's first executive director. Those who worked closely with Carter suspect Guinea worm's toll on poor African farmers resonated with the former president, who lived as a boy in a Georgia farmhouse without electricity or running water.

"Nobody was doing anything about it, and it was such a spectacularly awful disease," said Dr.

Donald Hopkins, an architect of the campaign who led the center's health programs until 2015. "He could sympathize with all of these farmers being too crippled from Guinea worm disease to work."

Changing behaviors

There's no vaccine that prevents Guinea worm infections or medicine that gets rid of the parasites. Treatment has changed little since ancient Greece. Emerging worms are gently wound around a stick as they're slowly pulled through the skin. Removing an entire worm without breaking it can take weeks.

So instead of scientific breakthroughs, this campaign has relied on persuading millions of people to change basic behaviors. Workers from the center and host governments trained volunteers to teach neighbors to filter water through cloth screens, removing tiny fleas that carry the larvae. Villagers learned to watch for and report new cases — often for rewards of \$100 or more. Infected people and dogs had to be prevented from tainting water sources.

The goal was to break the worm's life cycle — and therefore eliminate the parasite itself — in each endemic community, eventually exterminating Guinea worm altogether.

The campaign became a model for confronting a broader range of neglected tropical diseases afflicting impoverished people with limited access to clean water, sanitation and health care. Expanding its public health mission, the center has supplied training, equipment and medicines that helped 22 countries eliminate at least one disease within their borders.

Mali became the latest in May 2023 when the WHO confirmed it had ended trachoma, a blinding eye infection. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are working to eliminate malaria and mosquito-borne lymphatic filariasis by 2030. Countries in Africa and the Americas are pursuing an end to river blindness by 2035.

A personal mission

Having a former U.S. president lead the charge brought big advantages to a nonprofit that relied on private donors to fund its initiatives. Carter's fundraising enabled the center to pour \$500 million into fighting Guinea worm. He persuaded manufacturers to donate larvicide as well as nylon cloth and specially made drinking straws to filter water. His visits to afflicted villages often attracted news coverage, raising awareness globally.

"He went to so many of the localities where people were afflicted," said Dr. William Brieger, a professor of international health at Johns Hopkins University who spent 25 years in Africa. "The kind of attention that was drawn to him for getting on the ground and highlighting the plight of individual people who were suffering, I think that made an important difference."

Carter first saw the disease up close in 1988 while visiting a village in Ghana where nearly 350 people had worms poking through their skin. He approached a young woman who appeared to be cradling a baby in her arm.

"But there was no baby," Carter wrote in his 2014 book "A Call to Action." "Instead, she was holding her right breast, which was almost a foot long and had a worm emerging from the nipple."

Carter used his status to sway other leaders to play larger roles. Some heads of state got competitive,



Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, second from left, watches while a farmer with Guinea worm disease receives treatment from a volunteer trained by The Carter Center in partnership with the Government of Southern Sudan's Guinea Worm Eradication Program, Feb. 11, 2010.

spurred by the center's charts and newsletters that showed which countries were making progress and which lagged behind.

Worms in a war zone

In 1995, Carter intervened when a civil war in southern Sudan made it too dangerous for workers to reach hundreds of hotspots. The ceasefire he negotiated enabled the center and others to distribute 200,000 water filters and discover more endemic villages.

Carter's efforts not only stopped transmissions in much of what became South Sudan but also built trust across communities that resulted in a "significant peace dividend," said Makoy Samuel Yibi, the young nation's Guinea worm eradication director.

Pakistan in 1993 became the first endemic country to eliminate human cases. India soon followed. By 1997, the disease was no longer found in Asia. By 2003, cases reported worldwide were down to 32,000 — a 99% decline in less than two decades.

Some setbacks frustrated Carter. Visiting a hospital packed with suffering children and adults amid a 2007 resurgence in Ghana, Carter suggested publicly that the disease should perhaps be renamed "Ghana worm."

"Ghana was deeply embarrassed," Hopkins said.

Ghana ended transmission within three more years. Even more inspiring: Nigeria, which once had the most cases in the world, reached zero infections in 2009. "That was a thunderclap," Hopkins said. "It was important throughout Africa, throughout the global campaign."

To the last worm

Even after being diagnosed with brain cancer, Carter remained focused: "I'd like the last Guinea worm to die before I do," he told reporters in 2015.

Despite dwindling cases, total success has proven elusive. Historic flooding and years of civil war have displaced millions of people who lack clean drinking water across central Africa. Of the 13 total cases reported in 2023, nine occurred in Chad, where infections in dogs have made the worms harder to eliminate.

"These are the most challenging places on planet Earth to operate in," said Adam Weiss, who has directed the campaign since 2018. "You need eyes and ears on the ground every single day."

The campaign still relies on about 30,000 volunteers spread among roughly 9,000 villages. Staying vigilant can be difficult now that cases are so rare, Weiss said.

"I would still like to think we will beat the timeline," Weiss said of the 2030 eradication goal. "The Carter Center is committed to this, obviously, no matter what."

- VOA News

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

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VERONICA JAVIER, MSW, RSW
PLANNER, MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS AND ONCOLOGY



TRANSFORMING MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN SCARBOROUGH: SHN'S COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

After the holidays, January can bring a mix of challenges that affect mental health, from the post-holiday letdown to the return to work or school. The cold, gloomy, and dark days in Ontario can make the “winter blues” feel even more intense, often leading to seasonal depression.

As demand for care continues to grow, Scarborough Health Network (SHN) is taking bold steps to improve access to services and meet the needs of patients in Scarborough, Durham and Markham.

One of the key staff members driving these efforts is Veronica Javier, planner for mental health, addictions, and oncology at SHN. A long-time Scarborough resident and advocate for her community, Veronica's work is rooted in both personal and professional experience. “For more than 30 years, Scarborough has been more than just a place to live for me—it's been a community that has shaped my identity, values, and career,” she says.

Veronica immigrated to Scarborough with her family in 1989, and the community has had a significant impact on her life. “From my first job at Scarborough Town Centre to buying my first home here, every step has reinforced my connection to this area. Scarborough isn't just where I grew up; it's a part of who I am.” As a leader within SHN, she has witnessed the challenges many face when accessing mental health care. “My children, parents, and I have found care, compassion, and healing within SHN's walls. It feels like home because, each time we come, we know we're in the hands of dedicated professionals who genuinely care,” she reflects.

SHN is home to Ontario's second-largest community-based mental health program, which sees 65,000 outpatient visits and 2,000 inpatient visits annually while receiving more than 10,000 referrals each year. The hospital network's vision is to become the highest-performing mental health and addiction system in Canada by providing accessible, equitable, and stigma-free care that leads to positive patient outcomes.

A major milestone for SHN came in June 2024 with the opening of the

SHN Community Mental Health Centre. Fully funded by donations, this centre consolidates outpatient services into one accessible location, offering specialized clinics and counselling that make it easier for Scarborough residents to get the help they need when they need it most.

The work does not stop there. A significant project on Veronica's radar is the consolidation of inpatient mental health units at SHN's Birchmount Hospital. Currently, these services are spread across multiple locations and lack the capacity to meet rising demand. The consolidation will centralize these services, improving efficiency and accessibility for those requiring inpatient care. The new facility will include 20 to 25 adult inpatient beds, 12 beds for the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit and a dedicated space for adolescents. “One of the biggest challenges we face is securing the funding we need to provide Scarborough residents with the excellent care they deserve,” Veronica says, stressing the importance of community support.

The Love, Scarborough campaign, which aims to raise \$200 million for SHN, is key to achieving these goals. “Funding the campaign will help ensure we have the resources to expand mental health services,” Veronica says.

In addition to her work in mental health, Veronica's Filipino heritage plays an essential role in her advocacy efforts. As chair of SHN's Filipino Community of Inclusion, Veronica represents the growing Filipino community within SHN, a group that is a significant part of Scarborough's



Veronica

diverse population. “I was amazed to learn that Tagalog is the second most spoken language at SHN after English. For SHN to support Filipino staff through a dedicated community of inclusion is deeply meaningful to me,” Veronica shares. Veronica hopes to inspire others to support the campaign. “Donating to SHN means investing in a place that has cared for my family, my community, and countless individuals who call Scarborough home. Together, we can build a stronger, healthier future for Scarborough residents.”

To support the future of mental health care in Scarborough, please visit

LoveScarborough.ca.



SCARBOROUGH HEALTH NETWORK ANNOUNCES NEW CHIEF AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

On Monday January 6th, 2025 Scarborough Health Network (SHN) announced the appointment of **Dr. Elan Ambalavanar** as the new **Chief and Medical Director for the Department of Emergency Medicine** at SHN.

We are thrilled to announce the appointment of Dr. Elan Ambalavanar as the new Chief and Medical Director for the Department of Emergency Medicine at Scarborough Health Network (SHN).

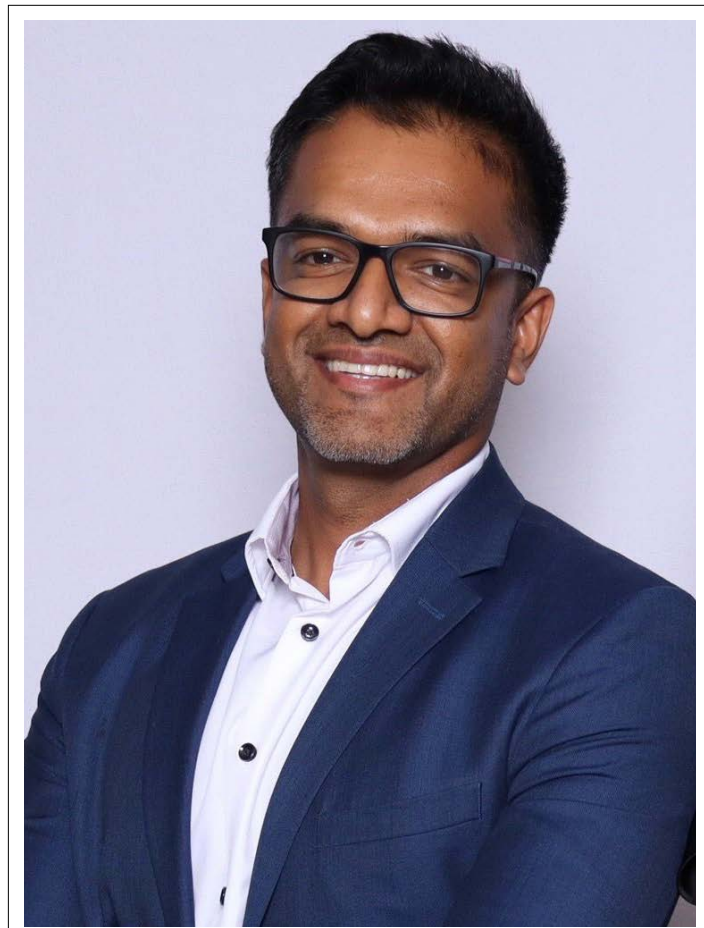
We are also excited to announce the new Deputy Chief of Emergency Medicine, Dr. Mayoorendra (Mayo) Ravichandiran.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Elan Ambalavanar and Dr. Mayo Ravichandiran on their new roles and supporting them as they lead our Emergency Medicine Department to new heights.



Dr. Elancheliyan Ambalavanar

Dr. Ambalavanar brings a wealth of experience and a strong background in clinical operations, quality improvement, and healthcare leadership. Throughout his tenure at SHN, Dr. Ambalavanar has been dedicated to improving patient care, optimizing processes, and fostering a culture of collaboration and excellence. In his previous role as Associate Medical Director and Co-Chief of Emergency Medicine, Dr. Ambalavanar led critical initiatives, including the design of the new Emergency Department at Centenary Hospital and renovation projects at the SHB and SHG sites. His leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic was instrumental in establishing a satellite Emergency Department and expanding care spaces to manage patient volumes.



Dr. Mayoorendra Ravichandiran

Dr. Ravichandiran has been a dedicated member of SHN for over 20 years, starting as a volunteer and joining as a physician 10 years ago. Throughout his tenure, Dr. Ravichandiran has been instrumental in advancing patient care, safety, and staff wellness. He has promoted the use of point-of-care ultrasound in the emergency department, led community outreach programs during the pandemic, and worked with enterprise analytics to improve efficiency and safety. In his previous roles as Associate Medical Director and Interim Co-Chief, Dr. Ravichandiran has focused on quality of care, staff satisfaction, and efficiency by increasing staff and physician engagement. He has also been actively involved in healthcare education and research, leading the ultrasound program and overseeing resident research projects. Dr. Ravichandiran is committed to continuing to advance the excellent clinical care we deliver to our Scarborough community and supporting SHN's goals as part of a world-class center for medical education and research.



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FAA's NEW TOOL – TSAIS, To Prevent Runway Incidents and Accidents at The Airports

By: Kane Siva

There have been too many accidents and incursions on the runways in the last 10 to 15 years. I wouldn't say it is unforeseeable but why is this growing like cancer in most of the airports involving large passenger aircraft and even with small light planes too? ICAO -International Civil Aviation Organization defines Runway incursions as any occurrence where an aircraft, vehicle, or person is in the wrong place on the protected area of an aerodrome that is meant for landing and take-off an aircraft. This protected area includes the runway, stopway, runway end safety area and the area along each side of the runway. ICAO raises its alarm over these incidents which are at an increasing rate over the years and categorically says it is an ongoing and consistent threat to aviation safety. ICAO places more valuable resources to solve or minimize this since it considers runway incursions as one of the 5 high risk factors for aviation safety. Runway incursion and excursion results in severe casualties and increases the mortalities. Several elements contribute to these incursions. A comprehensive approach suggested by the ICAO to curb this issue involved airport operators, airlines, ground handlers, air navigation personnel and other airport regulators. The coordination, awareness, the training and urgency of the situation is the key. With the help of other aviation bodies such as IATA, Airport Council International, Flight Safety Foundation, European, Australian, NTSB and the FAA, the ICAO developed a program called "GAPPRI-Global Action Plan for the Prevention of Runway Incursions. Some of the strategies developed by this program are (a) Runway Safety Teams that advise on runway safety matters.(b) Stop Bars: Stop Bars are used at every runway --holding position to prevent them from crossing without explicit clearance from the ATC, ©Taxiway Naming: means to have logical names to reduce confusion and navigation errors. The other elements considered are the proper lighting system, everyday physical inspection of the runway system and all the navigational aids.

I would say the most serious incursion incident and accident occurred in 1977 in Tenerife Island Involving B747s aircraft of KLM & PAN AM. 583 lives were



lost and 61 injured. There are various components that contribute to these runway incidents and accidents. But I am sure it all boils down to HUMAN ERROR in the end if all the tools are provided to the players involved and knowing well it is not so. Invariably it is a never-ending blame game.

The reasons for these incidents are multifold. Communication problems between the pilots and the ATC. Internationally all the pilots are expected to be fluent in their English language skills, but this is not the case and as a result their messages can be misheard, misunderstood or misinterpreted due to the dialect and

pronunciations. Workload of the pilots, air traffic controllers, (mostly shortage of qualified personnel) runway markings, the lighting system, apron parking position and the markings (Same letter Markings on the taxiway, runway and parking bay which for sure will confuse any seasoned flier).The design of the airport too plays a major role. There are instances where aircraft have to cross active runways to position them for take-off or to their parking positions. All the vehicle movements are monitored in the ramp, parking area and across the runway too. But there is a 100% chance the messages may be misunderstood due to language issues. Most airport

operators outsource the jobs to a contractor who uses not qualified or properly trained staff to do the service resulting in many accidents and incidents. The weather plays a crucial role too in all these accidents, especially low visibility and snowy conditions.



After striking the Dash 8, the A350 travelled along runway 34R before veering off the right shoulder

Source: JTSB



Aviation & Airlines

SPECIAL FEATURE



There are a lot of other factors too. Some light aircraft operates without proper communication facilities, not maintained technically and flying with inexperienced pilots and at times with rogue pilots.

The runway incidents and accidents due to incursions have been on the increase. The worst one in recent memory was at Haneda Airport, Japan, involving a JAL Flight 516, an Airbus A350 from New Chitose Airport to Haneda Airport, collided with a Japan Coast Guard De Havilland Canada Dash-8 aircraft while landing on the 2nd January 2024. Fortunately all 379 passengers on A350 were evacuated safely but unfortunately 6 of the passengers aboard the Coast Guard aircraft were killed. The accident report indicated that the Captain of the Coast Guard flight mistook the instruction of the Air Traffic Controller and entered the runway 34R thinking that Takeoff clearance was given. The report further amplified the fact that none of the air traffic controllers noticed that the Coast Guard aircraft entered the runway. There was another incident at Haneda airport in June 2023 involving a Thai Airways and Eva Air Airbus- A3330 aircraft while taxiing out for take-off, clipping off the wingtip of the Thai Airways aircraft. As I am narrating this, on the 27th of December, 2024, at Los Angeles International Airport at 430pm, a private Jet, Key Lime Air Flight 563, carrying a college Basketball Team barely and narrowly avoided colliding with a Delta Airlines Flight 471 from Los Angeles to Atlanta, Hartsfield-Jackson International. The Air Traffic Controllers directed Lime Air Flight to hold at the end of the taxiway short of crossing the runway where the Delta Flight was taking off. Fortunately, the presence of mind of the ATC personnel prevented the Lime Air from entering the runway by yelling on the radio "Stop, Stop, Stop" thus avoiding another major air disaster.

These types of incidents keep on happening and all the aviation agencies including the FAA are trying their best to avoid these unnecessary accidents, incidents and human fatalities. We must understand that all the operators are operating in a constrained environment and time, and as such prone to these incidents. But safety is the main Goal in Aviation.

Recently the FAA, through their efforts developed a system that looks like a watershed moment for aviation to prevent or minimize these incidents. It is called "The Surface Awareness Initiative System". This is a new technology that will be installed in 18 airports across the USA with the objective of reducing close calls on runways and preventing more fatalities.

The Surface Awareness Initiative System -TSAIS uses sensors that are spread across the airfield and correspond with monitors in the air traffic control towers. All the aircraft movements and vehicles will be shown as an image



like that on a Radar. These images will be seen on an Airport Map that details runways, taxiways and other vulnerable areas. This new technology gives air traffic controllers real-time data, indicating the traffic on the ground, so they can communicate any visible dangers to the pilots. Craig Lowenstein the Lead for this project with the FAA says this will make the ATC to increase their safety through these tools and makes a visual scan of the runway easier. He elaborated further that this new tool will become more handy especially during bad weather conditions and when the visibility is

conditions and this tool has been active from December 15th, 2024.

I hope this New Tool will work when the weather is impacted by heavy snow during winter. If so, it will be good for Canada, Russia and other countries that experience snowy conditions. Also, this tool would be of great help for Air traffic controllers in the Middle Eastern countries too when visibility drops almost zero due heavy intermittent sandstorms.

I hope and pray that this tool be enhanced to prevent the incidents and accidents in the tarmac and apron areas too where the area is more constrained and there are too many vehicular movements with all the service providers as well as the aircraft movements.

FAA officials are saying now that for the first time the rate of runway incursions have decreased in 2024 when compared with the previous years. Quoting Lowenstein there are some success stories after this new technology has been introduced in the first 4 airports and this is a remarkable development for the safety of air travel.

The aviation world is sure to be more gratified by this new innovative tool and hope and pray this adaptation will save lives and prevent runway incidents and accidents due to incursions.

As Albert Einstein said:

"CREATIVITY IS SEEING WHAT EVERYONE ELSE HAS SEEN. AND THINKING WHAT NO ONE ELSE HAS THOUGHT."



Tower Airport Tampa Florida

critical. The FAA realizes that the volume of air traffic is multiplying, operating space is restricted and the accidents and the incidents are on the rise. This new tool looks like a lifesaver for lots of airlines, airport operators and passengers. Already this technology has been installed in 4 airports in the US. Tampa International Airport in Florida (TPA) and 18 other airports in the US have been chosen recently for this new technology installation, especially first at TPA because of the Foggy weather



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SPECIAL FEATURE

Words of Peace

EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK 'HEAR YOURSELF' (ULLATHTHIN KURAL IN TAMIL)

BECOMING FULLY AWAKE

Why do we have such problems letting our life bloom? Why does the noise so often drown out the music of life? Because we can forget what is important. The journey to peace begins with the appreciation of the simplest but most important thing we have; our existence. That is the starting point for self-knowledge. We always have that opportunity to express gratitude for this life, giving thanks for each breath rather than wasting our attention.

When was the last time that you were deeply thankful for being alive? I'm not just talking about those funeral thoughts; you know, you see a hearse and think, "I'm glad that's not me in there", I mean being fully awake to the day and the night, really feeling your existence.

AN URGENT REMINDER

So there are the two walls. – birth and death – and when we get closer to where we imagine the second wall might be, it looms in our mind. Worrying about death can become a huge, ugly, loud distraction – perhaps the noisiest of all the problems. If we are not careful, we can end up celebrating our birthday once a year but thinking about death every day. And here is a terrible irony: Every moment spent being anxious about death is a waste of precious life. We can be so taken

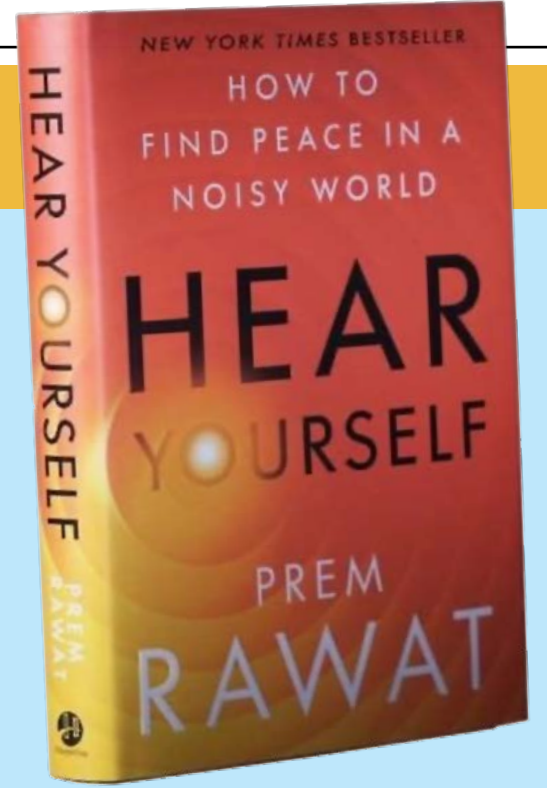
by the desire to live forever that we forget to live today.

Try as we might, we can't avoid going through that second wall at some point. Even the cleverest among us – or perhaps I should say, Often the cleverest among us – get distracted from the natural truth that we are mortal.

AN INVITATION TO THE INFINITE

For billions of years, you and I were nothing. For billions of years or more into the future we will be nothing again. Our time here is the exception. Our job is to live these minutes, hours, and days in an exceptional way.

My invitation to you is this:



dare to experience the time-less today of inner peace. Your life here is finite, but you have the opportunity to transcend that and momentarily connect with the infinite – the joy of pure existence. It is a way of consciously experiencing the universal power I described earlier.

The opportunity is for us, as finite beings, to encounter the infinite. It is into this timeless world of pure experience that we are heading.

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உள்ளத்தின் குரல்

பிரேம் ராவத்

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Truths that live in words



By: J A Rajah

1. "The business of life is to go forward"

- Johnson

வாழ்க்கையின் பணி முன்னேறுவதே!!

- ஜோன்சன்

2. "Nothing is more highly prized than the value of each day"

- Goethe

ஒவ்வொரு நாளையும் விட உயர்ந்தது வேறொன்றுமில்லை...

- ஜியோதி

3. "You never know what is enough until you know what is more than enough"- William Blake.

போதுமானது எது என அறியாமல் எது போதுமானது என எம்மால் அறிய முடியாது - வில்லியம் பிளேக்கை

4. "Study without reflection is a waste of time; reflection without study is dangerous" - Confucious

பயன்பாடற்று படிப்பது நேரத்தை வீணடிப்பதாகும் படிப்பற்ற பயன்பாடு ஆபத்தானது - கொன்பியூசியஸ்

5. "Wealth is not his who has it, but his who enjoys it"

- Franklin

செல்வம் என்பது, அதை வைத்திருப்பதால் பெறப்படுவதில்லை, அதைப் பயன்படுத்தி மகிழ்வதால் பெறப்படுவது - பிராங்க்லின்

6. "The grand essentials of life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for" - Addison.

வாழ்க்கையின் நோக்கம் : அர்த்தமுள்ள செயற்படு, அர்த்தமுள்ள அன்பு, அர்த்தமுள்ள நம்பிக்கை!! - எடிசன்

7. "Perfection is obtained by slow degrees; it requires the hand of time" - Voltaire

பூரணத்துவம் சுலபமாக கிடைப்பதில்லை, அதற்கு சில காலங்கள் தேவைப்படும் - வோல்டியர்

8. "Think not those faithful who praise all thy words and actions, but those who kindly prove thy faults" - Socrates

உங்களை சொயல்களையும், உங்கள் வார்த்தைகளையும் புகழ்கின்றவர்களை நம்பாதீர்கள் மாறாக உங்கள் பிழைகளை சுட்டிக்காட்டுபவர்களை நம்புங்கள் - சோக்ரேடஸ்

9. "From a little spark may burst a mighty flame" - Dante

ஒரு சிறிய தீப்பொறியிலிருந்தே பெரு நெருப்பு உருவாகும் - டான்டி

10. "Give thou canst some alms; if not afford instead, a sweet and gentle word" - Herrick.

உங்களிடம் கொடுப்பதற்கு ஒன்றுமில்லையாயினும் கனிவான பேச்சும் ஆறுதல் வார்த்தைகளும் போதுமானது. - ஹரிக்

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BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

Thulasi Muttulingam
Yesterday at 2:34 AM



In 1955, photographer Ken Russell immortalized a little-known subculture in post-war Britain with his image "The Last of the Teddy Girls." The Teddy Girls, or "Judies," were the female counterparts to the Teddy Boys, a youth movement defined by its sharp, Edwardian-inspired fashion and defiance of social norms. Breaking away from conventional femininity, Teddy Girls embraced a bold style of tailored jackets, rolled-up jeans, neck scarves, and masculine brogues. Their distinctive fashion was a statement of rebellion during a time of significant cultural change.— in NYC.

Emerging in the 1950s, the Teddy Girls were shaped by Britain's socio-economic struggles in the aftermath of World War II. Many came from working-class backgrounds, piecing together outfits from thrifted items and repurposed hand-me-downs. Despite their modest means, they used fashion to assert individuality and challenge societal expectations. Unlike the more celebrated Teddy Boys, Teddy Girls remained in the shadows of history, but Ken Russell's photographs offered a rare and intimate glimpse into their world, capturing their strength, camaraderie, and defiance.

Russell's work preserves the legacy of the Teddy Girls, showcasing a movement that pushed back against rigid gender roles and class barriers. These young women used their style not only to express themselves but also to navigate a rapidly changing post-war society. Today, the Teddy Girls are remembered as pioneers of alternative fashion and feminist rebellion, their influence still visible in modern subcultures and evolving ideas of gender and identity.

Thulasi Muttulingam
January 5 at 4:13 PM

Comrade Hammer
@JoshWiniecke

Capitalism, Planned Obsolescence: a policy of producing consumer goods that rapidly become obsolete and so require replacing, achieved by frequent changes in design, termination of the supply of spare parts, and the use of nondurable materials.

Give A Shift About Nature
January 5 at 3:30 AM

This needs to end.

Thulasi Muttulingam
January 7 at 1:18 AM

Nice story.
Wish they'd stop using AI to write the story.
The prose is very fake and mechanical.
Take away from the life giving force of the story.

Foresters Carry 600kg Rhino Calf On Shoulders After Rescuing It From A Swamp.

Thulasi Muttulingam
Yesterday at 2:35 AM

“
Teaching is a creative profession, not a delivery system. Great teachers do [pass on information], but what great teachers also do is mentor, stimulate, provoke, engage.
—SIR KEN ROBINSON

Thulasi Muttulingam
January 5 at 3:58 PM

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Spring will arrive

Original in Tamil by Viji Ravi - English version by Siva Sinniah

The doorbell rang. I placed the Daily newspaper I was reading on the Teapoy and opened the door. A boy of about 16 years of age was standing there. He was wearing a color faded shirt and a blue pant. His shriveled hair was unkempt. He had a slightly budding mustache and a thin build.

"I am the son of Malika, who is supplying you with flowers. my mother told me to go and see you' he said.

'Oh, you are her son. Come in. What is your name?'

"Sundar, madam," he replied.

"Okay sit down here" and showed the chair in the veranda and went in and told Parvatham Ammal for a cup of coffee.

Instead of sitting on the chair he was looking at my husband's and mine name boards on the wall near the door.

I knew Mallika for more than 10 years. She used to bring jasmine, roses and carnations depending on the availability, on a daily basis for my Pooja room. At the beginning I bought flowers from her 2 to 3 days a week. Since the price was reasonable, I made her bring it daily. Whenever she is free, she used to relate her household stories to me.

She lost her husband in an accident when his son was 3 years of age. She returned to her parents and started selling flowers for a living. She said that she lost her parents within 5 years due to pneumonia. She told me that she is living for her only son. Her worries were seen on her melancholy face. When I asked her for the reason for her worries he related as follows:

"My son is not attending school now. He was managing well in his studies, but during the corona period schools were closed. He started spending time with his friends roaming all over the town. Refused to go to school after that. So, I did not force him. One day our neighbor Vishnu called him to help him at his tea shop. When he returned home in the evening, he had 20 or 30 rupees given by Vishnu. He was happy to see the money and told me that he would help me whenever I am sick and unable to work. So, I took it easy and allowed him to work there. After a couple of weeks, the person who was working originally there, returned to work after a brief illness. Hence my son lost his job. Then he started working in a motor mechanical shop as a helper doing some odd jobs.

I told him several times to go to school and he never listened. One day he told me not to force him and if I insist, he may run away from home. So, I am deeply worried about his future." she



started crying. I pacified her by saying that I may be able to help her and asked her to send her son to meet me.

Most of the fatherless boys drop out of school and don't listen to their mother's advice. Furthermore, covid had a negative impact on their minds. The latest Technologies like smartphones, have made them lose their moral values and disrespect their parents and teachers. Some have even slapped their teachers at school. The world is undergoing a rapid change.

I called him Sundar and he turned and looked at me innocently. I felt sorry for him.

"Why don't you sit on the chair?" I told him.

"It is okay Madam" and kept standing.

"Don't worry, sit and have the coffee "and I gave him the cup and he looked at me with shyness and received it.

"Do you know why I asked you to come here?"

He shook his head to indicate that he had no clue.

"My son got a job in Bangalore, and he is getting ready to go there and I called you to assist him in packing his things".

Once he finished drinking the coffee, I took him to my son's room upstairs. He was seated on the floor and the cupboards were all open and his clothes were on his bed.

"Ranjit see Sundar is here to help you" I told him.

He smiled at him and said, "Sundar come and sit here". He went and sat

Short Story

SPECIAL FEATURE



beside him on the floor. I sat on a chair in the corner with a book.

Ranjit knew why Sunder was called by me, since I had already told him about him. I told him that if you try to advise him, he may not listen and it would be better to make him realize the intricacies of life in an indirect way. Ranjit agreed to try.

"Sunder, do you know why we are here and what we are going to do now? You have to sort out my clothes in this order. First you have to select all the clothes I am going to take with me to Bangalore, then all clothes which are not fitting to me to be kept separately to be donated. Another category is the ones I like, to be given to the tailor for alteration. Then see all my books in the almirah to be neatly arranged and out of that some are to be taken out, for me to take with me."

Sunder agreed and said "Brother first you show me the books you would like to take with you, so that I can pack them and keep them separately. After that I can sort out the clothes as instructed."

Ranjit agreed to his suggestion and showed him the books to be taken with him. He started packing them in a box.

"Brother, what is the work you are going to do there?" asked Sunder.

"I am a Software Engineer." He couldn't understand it and was looking blank at me.

"You know IT job, friend."

"Oh, I see. Yes, I know that. What is your salary?"

"40,000 rupees"

"What 40,000 a month!. Do they pay you so much?" He was surprised to hear that.

"Do you know that my mother is getting one and a half lakhs salary, and my father is a bank manager. He was shocked and he looked at me.

"Is your mother a doctor?"

I was happy to see that everything was moving well as expected.

"She is not a medical doctor but a PhD, doctorate and is a Professor in a college".

"For that you have to study for several years, don't you?"

"Yes, but that is not so in my case," said Ranjit. I studied for 4 years in college. I am now 21 years of age, only five years older than you."

This conversation had the expected effect on him and his face changed and he started thinking. "What grade you were in?" asked Ranjit

"I was in Grade 9 and then the school was closed for covid. After that I never thought of going to school. Even if I study, I don't think I will get a big salary." he spoke in a faint voice.

"Okay, what work you are doing now and how much are you getting?" asked Ranjit.

"I am doing whatever work comes to me. I am getting around 3,000 rupees a month".

"Do you think this is enough for you? Do you expect your mother to sell flowers till the end of her life? To get 10,000 rupees do you know how many years

it will take? you know by the time you get that amount, prices of all household items will go up and it will be difficult to run the family"

"Do you mean to say that illiterate people have no place to live here. So many people without education have come up in life by doing business," replied Sunder. He was slightly worked up.

Wow, this is the moment I expected. This has touched his ego, and I expected my son to handle him carefully.

"Yes there are one or two among 10,000 people who have come up in life. The rest are working as laborers at very low wages. They suffer till they die with hand to mouth living. What do you see in the movies, where one guy becomes a millionaire during the duration of a song is unreal. This never happens in real life. Even if you decide to do business, you must have the basic education. If you have some technological knowledge and then start something, you may do well. You can be comfortable throughout your life." said Ranjit.

"Yes, I agree, but studying is not easy and it requires lots of money," said Sunder with sadness.

"You don't have to struggle to study, you study whatever you like. There are so many scholarships available. You have no father and there are so many facilities available for people like you. If you now concentrate on your studies, your future will be bright. If you study for six or seven years more, you can go to heights in life," I said.

"This will not suit me Madam", he said carelessly.

He completed the task of packing all the clothes in the suitcase and the travel bag. He cleaned the cupboard with an old cloth and arranged the balance of clothes neatly.

In the meantime, Parvatham Ammal called on the intercom and told them of the visit of Ranjit's friend.

"Sunder, my friend is here, come we go down to meet him."

So three of them went down, Mathan, his friend, came and hugged him with affection. They have been friends from childhood and even though Mathan is senior by two years, they behave like friends of the same age.

"Auntie, I hope you are in good health. My mother is also here," said Mathan.

"Welcome, good," I replied. Revathi, his mother, came out of the kitchen, as she was speaking to Parvatham and greeted me and my son.

"I am okay Auntie, you all have forgotten us, you don't have to wait for Mathan to visit us," said Ranjit.

"It has been nearly three months since you visited us," I told them.

"No not so Ranjit. How can we forget you all, who helped us immensely. I was a servant helping your mom in the kitchen and you all encouraged my son to study well and after he finished schooling, your father got him a loan to go to college. Now my son is an engineer

in the railways. These are the invaluable help done to my family by your family. "How can we forget you all" said Revathi with tears in her eyes.

I held her hand and said, "we have not done anything great. Your son studied well and we only helped him to come up in life". As I was speaking I glanced at Sunder who was surprised and visibly moved.

"Anyhow you had a big mind in helping us," said Revathi.

In the meantime, Ranjit said that "it is time to eat something as I am feeling hungry."

Parvatham informed us that she had prepared Pongal (sweet rice) and Puri for all of us.

Revathi refused to sit with us at the dining table, but we forced her and Sunder to join us. We all sat down and had breakfast. Sunder was watching all these as though in a dream world. He looked at his worn dress and was thinking of his unsuitable status, compared to the standard of others who were there. After finishing the breakfast and thanking all of us, Revathi and Mathan left our house.

Sunder was in a pensive mood. Ranjit tapped on his shoulders and asked him, "what are you thinking about?"

"Nothing brother," he replied. Look, my friend Mathan after finishing grade 10, was about to work in a mill as a laborer on the order of his father., but our family spoke to them and changed their mind and arranged for him to go to an Engineering College. My father got him a loan from the bank. He studied well and now is an Engineer. His mother is at home enjoying her old age peacefully."

Sunder looked at me and Ranjit and was trying to say something. I encouraged him to speak.

"I have never seen anywhere, the way you treated your friend Mathan and his mother, who was a servant at your house and helped them and treated them as equals at the dining table. This, I think, may be because of Mathan, who is now an engineer. At the mechanic shop where I am working, they treat me like dirt and give me only cold tea at times. At the end of the month when me and my mother go grocery shopping, the owner used to shout at us, that there is an outstanding amount to pay and still asking for more loan. Sometimes he keeps us waiting for hours to serve us. After going home my mother used to cry of her helplessness and poor condition. She used to complain of leg pain every night after selling flowers at various places." said Sunder and started crying.

"Look here don't cry, we are there to help you" said Ranjit and hugged him.

"Brother, I have decided to go to school. I will get a good job, and we'll feed my mother till she passes away. I am sure she'll be happy to hear this."

He was feeling happy and started smiling. We were also happy, that our plan worked well,

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Alternate for Pythagoras theorem

By: Kumar Punithavel

On seeing the tall structures and great irrigation systems with massive dams across the great rivers in the Tamil nation, I was wondering how it was possible without adequate knowledge of math, especially great theorems like Pythagoras theorem, which was enunciated by Great mathematician Pythagoras, who was born in Greece 500 years before Common Era. Later he travelled to Croton in southern Italy, where he founded a school in which initiates were sworn to secrecy and lived a communal, ascetic life. The theorem states that the area of the square whose side is the hypotenuse (side opposite the right angle) is equal to the sum of the areas of the squares on the other two sides. The theorem can be written as equation relating the lengths of the right-angle sides as a, b, and the hypotenuse c, sometimes called the Pythagoras equation;

This is quite straight forward and any one could use the formula and calculate the measurements of the structure and build. I started wondering how they built tall temples and irrigation systems in Tamil Nadu before they were exposed to Pythagoras theorem? While browsing around I came across a quatrain giving the clue to finding the hypotenuse of a right-angle triangle given by a Tamil pe

Poet Pothaynar. Let us see the Tamil poem and its translation. I also noticed there was a claim that this was authored many centuries before Pythagoras's era. However, while accepting it might have been written before, let us not indulge much on that aspect.

“ஓடும் நீளம் தனை ஒரேஎட்டுக்
கூறு ஆக்கி கூறிலே ஒன்றைத்
தள்ளி குன்றத்தில் பாதியாய்ச் சேர்த்தால்
வருவது கர்ணம் தானே” ஸ
- போதையனார்

Divide the longer side by eight,
Deduct eighth of the longer side,
Divide the shorter to half and add to the
previous, Dividend will be hypotenuse.
- Pothayanar.

Pothayanar is the name of the poet. In days gone by one had to write on an ola



leaf and it is a very difficult task to try and contain the message in as few words as possible. The poem suggests adding 7/8th of the longer side to the half of the shorter side and will give the length of the hypotenuse. There is no mention of squares on the sides. Let us do a few examples of calculation and see how effective the verse is.

Example 1:

A right-angle triangle with two sides 6 and 8 let us consider. As per Pythagoras theorem will be

$6^2 + 8^2 = 10^2$. meaning the hypotenuse will be 10.

Let us use the verse and see how our result will be. The longer side is 8 and taking away one eighth will be $8-1=7$. Half of the other side of the right-angle would be half of six which is 3. Thus $3+7=10$. They tally with the Pythagoras's result.

Example 2:

Say the right-angle triangle with two sides 4 and 3 let us consider. As per Pythagoras theorem the result will be $4^2 + 3^2 = 5^2$ meaning the hypotenuse will be 5.

Let us use the verse and see how our result will be. The longer side is 4 and take away one eighth will be $4-1/2=3 1/2$. Half of the other side 3 is $1 1/2$. Add these two the answer will tally with the Pythagoras's result.

Example 3:

This time let us take the right-angle triangle with two sides 12 and 16 let us consider. As per Pythagoras the result will be $12^2 + 16^2 = 20^2$ meaning the hypotenuse will be 20.

Now let us consider the method given in the Tamil verse. The longer of the two is 16, and one eighth will be 2, and less that amount will be 14. Half of the second length 12 will be 6, this added to 14 the answer will be 20. This too tally with the Pythagorean answer.

Here is given below ten different calculations for hypotenuse by both methods, Pythagoras and Tamil verse method and you could notice the difference is always less than one percent.

The verse written by Pothaynar is claimed to have lived 800 years before the Common Era whereas Pythagoras as I mentioned earlier, is said to believe 500 years before Common Era. Though I could not get credible proof of the time period, and I must confess only now I realized there are means of finding the hypotenuse of a right-angle triangle without getting the square of the sides after reading the ancient Tamil verse. Thought I should share information with you all, and hope you enjoyed the reading it. The Tamilian race must have been well literate long ago.

A Base	B Opposite Side	C Hypotenuse		% Error
		Pythagoras Method	Tamil Method	
4.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	0.00
5.00	2.00	5.39	5.38	0.19
6.00	5.00	7.81	7.75	0.77
10.00	8.00	12.81	12.75	0.44
12.00	6.00	13.42	13.50	-0.62
14.00	8.00	16.12	16.25	-0.78
24.00	12.00	26.83	27.00	-0.62
42.00	22.00	47.41	47.75	-0.71
345.00	128.00	367.98	365.88	0.57
1243.00	546.00	1357.63	1360.63	-0.22



SPECIAL FEATURE

THE US AND THE TRUMP TRIUMPHANT

By: J A Rajah

A. Trump's Progressive Policies :

The US elections that concluded recently led to the return of the former president Donald Trump. It was a hard-fought election and Trump obtained 51% of the votes and secured victory. The main reasons for Trump's victory are his policies on economy, immigration and foreign policy. All the failures of the Biden-Harris government affected Kamala's chances of victory. Increasing cost of living, illegal entry into the US through the Mexican Border and increasing expenditure on wars were the negative points of the Biden administration. Though Kamala Harris campaigned strenuously with the help of former presidents like Barack Obama, and Clinton, she couldn't make it. Otherwise, she could have been the US's first woman President.

B. Interest in Picking the Proper Administrative Officials :

Donald Trump has all the advantages to form a strong government. After getting 51% of the popular vote and majority in the senate, he is able to pick up the right persons to strengthen his cabinet. He filled it up with loyalists and experienced persons in the field. Elton Musk, his greatest financier, is helping him to form the cabinet. Trump also picked Susy Wells, his long-term Campaign Strategist as his White House Chief of Staff. Apart from that he also gave good positions to his contenders like Robert Kennedy-Junior, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. Tom Homan, former ICE Director will be the czar of the border. Trump's cabinet picks reflect National Security Priority. Nancy Pelosi blamed President Biden for the failure of Kamala Harris. She said that he should have given up earlier. She said that it was the 'guns, god and gays' culture that led to the failure of the Biden government. Criminal activities and violent incidents went on unabated and marred the reputation of the government and Trump used it in his propaganda and won the race. She asserted that Harris should have alerted her supporters to vote early as Trump did. Trump's victory was attributed to several votes being cast before election day.

C. Trump and World Politics :

The re-entry of Trump for the second time as president of the US has changed the trend of world politics. He has vowed to

end wars and stop US spending as a result of engaging in wars and conflicts. He might stop giving arms and funds to Ukraine and Israel. or even cooperating with the European nations. Biden has already felt the need to give as much as possible to Ukraine before Trump takes over. On the other hand, Russia is increasing its drone attacks on Ukraine and Ukraine is responding with drone attacks on Russia. Putin is optimistic that the situation may improve after Trump takes on as US president. Trump also places taxes on all goods imported into the US. A cold war is expected with China. He has vowed to fix whatever was broken by the Biden-Harris administration. He will not allow criminals and murderers to get into America. He attributed all the violence hotting up in the US as the result of this policy of allowing easy entry of immigrants into the US. He will take every effort to complete the wall along the border with Mexico. Trump has also shown a friendly relationship with Russia which could promote world peace. Putin has already commented that Trump is a 'brave man'. There are also attempts at negotiating peace between Hamas and Israel as Israel is continuing its genocidal attacks on Northern Gaza with the view of evacuating the Palestinians from there. These developments are being intensified as Trump may take over the leadership of the US after the 20th of January. Mass deportation fears spike after Trump wins. He has made it clear that criminal migrants will get no favours. Nearly 225,000 migrants have come over to the US since 2022. Several migrants are in NYC shelters. Many voters for Trump said that they voted for Trump because of the economy even at the threat of being deported as an undocumented refugee. Trump has made an emergency decision to deport 20 million illegal immigrants from the US to their native lands as soon as he assumes office as president on the 20th of January 2025. Texas office has allocated 1,400 acres of land to help Trump's mass deportation plan. Trump is busy picking up his staff for his administration. He is mulling over picking Pam Bondi as the attorney -general, Mike Roger as FBI director and Kash Patel as Deputy Director of the FBI. There is a lot of opposition to the latter and Trump may retract. Some of his other selections are Tulsi Gabbard as secretary for Intelligence team, Scott Bisset as secretary for treasury, Scott Turner as secretary for Housing and Development and Russel Vought for Public Administration. Howard Lullnick is being considered for the position of

commerce-secretary. Karoline Leavill is being considered for the position of White House press secretary and John Ratcliff to be the Director of National Intelligence. Keith Kellogg will be the secretary for Ukraine and Russia. Siran Duffy will serve as secretary for Transportation. James Greer will serve as secretary for Trade. He will also stand by Hegseth as his defense secretary choice. Donald Sacks is being considered for the position of AI and Crypto czar. In view of the increasing rate of crime in the US, Trump has suggested a revision of the School curriculum for elementary education. He felt that Bible stories should be integrated into the Elementary School Curriculum. Trump's sentencing of the New York hush money case has been postponed indefinitely.

Trump sweeps nearly all Texas Border counties. This can be interpreted as support for Trump's Border restriction policies. Homan and Abbot vow to impose border laws. Trump plans to impose new tariffs(nearly 25%) on goods imported from Mexico, Canada and China. Trump's tariffs could cost 400 jobs. Trump is also mulling to buy Greenland which has vast quantities of natural resources which could boost the economy of the US and block countries like Russia from squandering it. Immigrant criminals cost over \$1668 M and Trump has resolved to reduce it drastically. Biden-Harris has been careless in allowing large number of Mexicans and Latinos to illegally migrate into the US causing the suffering and torture of nearly 300,000 children. Mexican President said that she agreed to stop migration from the south. It is said that illegal immigrants cost US 150 Billion in 2023. It is also believed that Trump can cut the National debt (nearly \$36 trillion) and sustain growth. Trump has recently called for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine.

D. Message of Unity and Optimism:-

Trump continues to proclaim a message of unity and optimism. He says he will embrace all the Americans whether they supported him at the elections or not. Strong economy and border security are his watch words. He has already said that he would put an end to the war in Ukraine and stop the genocide in Gaza. and usher in a period of peace in the world at large. The world is waiting for such times. In view of all these, the Time Magazine hoists Donald Trump on its cover page as the 'Man of the Year-2024' - on its cover page.





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THE ROLE OF UNIFORMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Uniforms play an important role in the work industry across various sectors. They serve several functions, including giving a sense of identity, ensuring safety, and enhancing professionalism.



Jerina Jesman
Grade 10 Student

Uniforms help create a good and bright image, showing a sense of belonging and teamwork among employees. In industries where safety is a concern, such as construction or healthcare, uniforms are often designed with protective features to safeguard workers from potential hazards. Additionally, wearing a uniform conveys a professional appearance, which can build trust and credibility with clients and customers. By fulfilling these purposes, uniforms contribute to both individual confidence and organizational success, reflecting the values and standards of the workplace.

Uniforms play a crucial role in showing a sense of belonging among employees, which is essential for maintaining a positive and collaborative work environment. When employees wear the same uniform, it levels the playing field, eliminating factors that are based on personal style, social status, or economic background. This promotes a sense of equality, where individuals are judged based on their work, contributions, and professionalism rather than their personal appearance or the workers' financial status. A uniform can serve as a powerful symbol of shared purpose, aligning employees with the values and goals of their organization. It visually reinforces a collective identity, reminding team members that they are part of something larger than themselves. This shared identity can boost self-esteem, encourage teamwork, and create a sense of pride in one's role, as employees feel more connected to their workplace and their colleagues.

Uniforms foster a sense of unity and belonging by creating a visual representation of team identity, which helps employees feel part of a cohesive group. When everyone wears the same attire, it eliminates distinctions based on personal fashion choices or financial differences, ensuring that individuals are valued for their skills and contributions rather than external factors. This equalizing effect enhances inclusivity, allowing employees to focus on collaboration and shared goals. Additionally, uniforms symbolize the values and mission of the organization, instilling pride and a sense of purpose among employees. By wearing a uniform, team members not only represent their company but also reaffirm their commitment to its success, fostering a positive and harmonious workplace culture.

Secondly, uniforms play a critical

role in enhancing safety across various industries, especially in sectors where workers face potential hazards. In construction and manufacturing, for instance, safety gear such as hard hats, steel-toed boots, and high-visibility vests are not just the standard uniforms, but essential for preventing injuries and maintaining visibility in environments with heavy machinery and moving vehicles. These items are designed to help reduce the risks of falling objects, sharp tools, and accidental collisions. In the healthcare industry, uniforms like scrubs, gloves, face masks, and sometimes protective eyewear serve a huge purpose: protecting healthcare workers from exposure to harmful bacteria and ensuring the clean environment that is necessary for patient care. These uniforms act as a barrier against infections, reducing the likelihood of contamination in high-risk environments like operating rooms or intensive care units.

In addition to enhancing identity and safety, uniforms play a vital role in reinforcing professionalism and bringing a cohesive image within an organization. When employees dress consistently and appropriately, it not only reflects the company's values but also boosts customer trust and satisfaction. A neat, uniform appearance signals attention to detail and reliability, making it easier for customers to identify staff and feel confident in the service they receive. In industries like hospitality, retail, and healthcare, professional uniforms can convey sophistication, efficiency, and high standards, creating a positive first impression and encouraging customer loyalty. Ultimately, uniforms help establish a sense of unity among employees and ensure that the business projects a professional image, contributing to a more seamless and trusted customer experience.

Uniforms in the workplace serve a crucial role in establishing identification, ensuring safety, enhancing



- aceuniform.com

professionalism, simplifying wardrobe choices, and fostering team dynamics. Beyond their appearance, they help create a structured and organized environment where employees are easily identifiable, reducing the confusion and improving communication with customers. Uniforms also contribute to safety by ensuring employees wear appropriate attire for specific tasks, minimizing the risk of accidents. They help elevate professionalism by projecting a polished image that builds trust and help give a good image, while also offering employees the convenience of not having to decide what to wear each day, leading to increased focus and productivity.



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Celebrating jazz music and Markham's culinary excellence, Jazzlicious is produced by Destination Markham in collaboration with Markham Jazz Festival, in partnership with Cosmo Music, Flato Markham Theatre, and JAZZ FM91.





SISTER CITIES OF RICHMOND HILL



Sister cities are pairs of cities or cities in different countries that are linked to one another through an agreement or partnership. Richmond Hill is proudly twinned with Netanya, Shijiazhuang and Lakeland.

Netanya, Israel

Netanya was twinned with Richmond Hill on November 22, 2016 to further enhance the economic and overall well-being of both communities. Netanya is home to some of Israel's most successful incubators and accelerators. It is also home to Poleg Industrial Park – a technology park housing some of the most innovative technology

companies in Israel. Famous for its beautiful beaches, Netanya is a popular tourist destination. Both Netanya and Richmond Hill are leaders in the high-tech sector and this agreement will support our businesses' ability to compete on a global scale.

Shijiazhuang, China

Shijiazhuang was twinned with Richmond Hill on July 9, 1998. Shijiazhuang is the economic, political, cultural and tourism centre of China's Hebei Province. Shijiazhuang has the largest base for the pharmaceutical industry in China and is also focused on the textile, petrochemical, building materials and electronics sectors. Shijiazhuang is renowned for being the final resting place for Canadian

surgeon and medical inventor Dr. Norman Bethune. Both communities are able to benefit from our shared focus on the pharmaceutical and nutraceutical sectors.

Lakeland, Florida

Lakeland was twinned with Richmond Hill on March 30, 1990. Located between Tampa and Orlando, Lakeland is well-known for its annual SUN 'n FUN Fly-in Airshow, the second largest event of its kind in the world. Lakeland and Richmond Hill are similar in terms of size, population and residential and commercial characteristics. The relationship was established to further friendship and to contribute to the development and prosperity of both communities.



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COMMUNITY WATCH



Durham Tamils Association Celebrating 25 Years Of Serving Our Tamil Community

The Durham Tamil Association has proudly served the community for 25 years and remains dedicated to supporting our members, youth, and seniors. We continue to offer a variety of activities almost every day, providing something for everyone, from children to seniors. This milestone would not have been possible without our amazing volunteers, who selflessly give their time and energy to serve the community. DTA is truly grateful for your ongoing support. Additionally, the DTA Tamil School continues its mission by offering Tamil language classes

to our students, fostering a connection to our cultural heritage for the next generation.

DTA'S HOMETLAND PROJECTS

DTA is proud to announce that we have completed over 90 homeland projects as of Dec 31, 2024. 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.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER & DANCE!

DTA proudly hosted its annual Christmas Dinner and Dance, a joyous occasion filled with fun, treats, and memorable moments for both kids and adults. This event would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of our hardworking Youth and Adult volunteers, whose efforts behind the scenes ensure these celebrations are truly special. A heartfelt thanks also goes to the executive team for their exceptional planning and coordination, making the night enjoyable for all our members.



LOCATION:
DTA CENTER
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SOUTH, AJAX, ON
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PER CLASS
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CLASS FOR YOUTH & ADULTS

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AGES 10 TO 54

**START DATE
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When: *Every Saturday from 9:30AM- 10:30AM.

Start date: Saturday, September 14th

Location: DTA Center
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Ajax, ON L2S 2H6

Ages : 10-54

PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE:
<https://www.durhamtamils.org/youth-adults-yoga-class.html>

Tel: 905-428-7007

Yoga class fees : **\$5** per class
(Please pay **14** classes fees **\$70**)

SAVE THE DATE: TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH AND PONGAL VIZHA

DTA is excited to host our Tamil Heritage Month and Pongal Vizha on Sunday, January 26th, 2025.

FREE EVENT! - Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 - Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Audley Recreation Centre · 1955 Audley Road N. Ajax, ON L1Z 0L2.

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

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- September Gala 2025

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For More Information Visit the website: dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca





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.

COMMUNITY WATCH



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](http://www.DurhamTamils.Org)

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(Unity Is Strength)

Durham Tamil Association

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DTA BADMINTON CLASSES ARE STARTING SOON

Do not miss this opportunity!!!

Two class options:

Oshawa:

Every Monday from 6PM-8PM.

Start date: Monday, January 6th

Location: Dr. S.J. Phillips Public School, 625 Simcoe Street North, Oshawa, ON L1G 4V5

Youth class Ages 7-17 & Adults

Whitby:

Every Wednesday from 6PM-8PM.

Start Date: Wednesday,

January 8, 2025

Location: E.A. Fairman Public School, 620 Walnut St, Whitby, L1N 2W8

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Let your inner star shine with a night of family fun and music!

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Free FAMILY KARAOKE NIGHTS EVERY FRIDAYS STARTING MAY 3RD 8:00 PM - 9:30PM

Website: durhamtamils.org Location: DTA Center 66 Harwood Ave S Ajax Phone# 905-428-7007

DTA SENIOR'S JAN MONTHLY MEETING

DTA Senior's March monthly meeting will be held on Sunday Jan 26, 2025 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 this month, please mention in the comments section to organize your cake-cutting at the meeting.



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Durham Tamil Association Celebrates

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH & Thai Pongal vizha 2025

தமிழ் மரபுத் திங்கள்/ தை
பொங்கல் விழா 2025
FREE EVENT!



SAVE ^{THE} DATE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2025

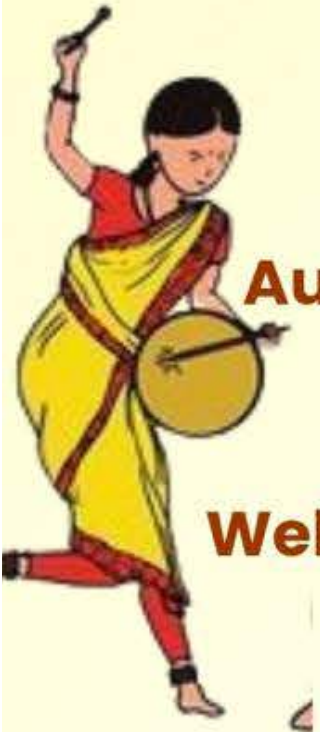
TIME : 10:00AM

Event Location:

Audley Recreation Centre (Banquet Hall)

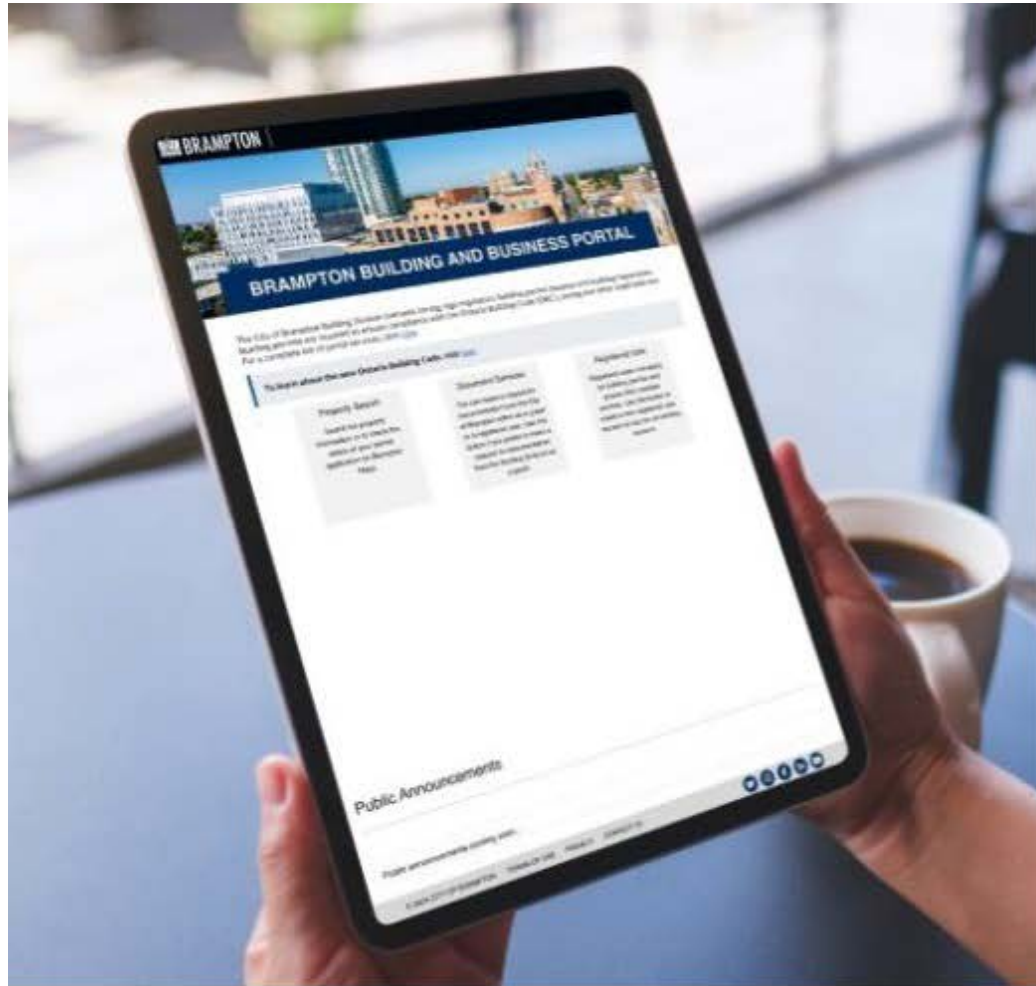
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Website: durhamtamils.org | 905-428-7007





CITY OF BRAMPTON WINS GRANICUS DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



2024 WINNER
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**CITY OF BRAMPTON AWARDED THE
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brampton.ca/bbportal



Brampton wins Granicus Digital Govt Award

✍️ EAWAZ / 📅 21 DECEMBER 2024 / 📰 LOCAL NEWS

The City of Brampton has been named a winner of the 2024 Granicus Digital Government Award for operational excellence, recognizing the City's commitment to delivering innovative, efficient and effective government services.

The award, presented annually by Granicus, honours public sector organizations across North America that have demonstrated transformational achievements in customer experience, service delivery and operational excellence. The City of Brampton stood out in the Local Government category highlighting the success of the Building and Business Portal, which improved the City's building permitting process by offering a fully digital, seamless experience for residents and businesses.

Launched in July 2024, the Building and Business Portal is an online tool enabling users to apply and pay for building permits, schedule inspections, track application statuses and access property records. This resulted in improved citizen satisfaction and significantly streamlined interactions between applicants, homeowners and City staff.

The Granicus Digital Government Awards celebrate the achievements of government entities that transform how public services are delivered. Winners were selected across seven categories, including Operational Excellence, Service Delivery and Community Engagement. The City of Brampton joins an elite group of government organizations whose

accomplishments will be highlighted in a series of webinars hosted by Granicus in early 2025.

As the City continues its journey toward operational excellence, this recognition serves as a milestone in Brampton's mission to enhance transparency, efficiency and service delivery for our growing community.

The Building and Business Portal was made possible through the exceptional collaboration between the City's IT and Planning, Building & Growth Management teams, showcasing the power of teamwork in driving innovative and impactful projects.

For more information about the 2024 Granicus Digital Government Awards, visit [Digital awards | Granicus](https://www.granicus.com/digitalawards).

Quotes

"This recognition from Granicus reflects our commitment to leveraging innovative technology to deliver exceptional service to our residents and businesses. I am proud of our IT and Planning, Building & Growth Management teams for leading the way in modernizing municipal services and setting an example of operational excellence that inspires other communities."

- Patrick Brown,
Mayor, City of Brampton

"This award highlights the forward-thinking approach that the City of Brampton takes to ensure our processes are efficient, accessible and community

focused. Congratulations to our teams for this well-deserved recognition of their efforts to enhance planning and development services for all Brampton residents."

- Michael Palleschi, Regional Councillor, Wards 2 & 6; Chair, Planning and Development Committee, City of Brampton

"Winning this award is a testament to the innovative spirit and collaboration within our teams. With cutting-edge technology, we have streamlined processes and improved service delivery, making a real difference for our residents and community members. I couldn't be prouder of this achievement."

- Steve Ganesh,
Commissioner, Planning, Building & Growth Management, City of Brampton

About Brampton:

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SPECIAL FEATURE

MATSYA (FISH) 1st OF DASAVATARAMS OF VISHNU AND SRI MATSYA NARAYANA TEMPLE IN NAGALAPURAM, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA



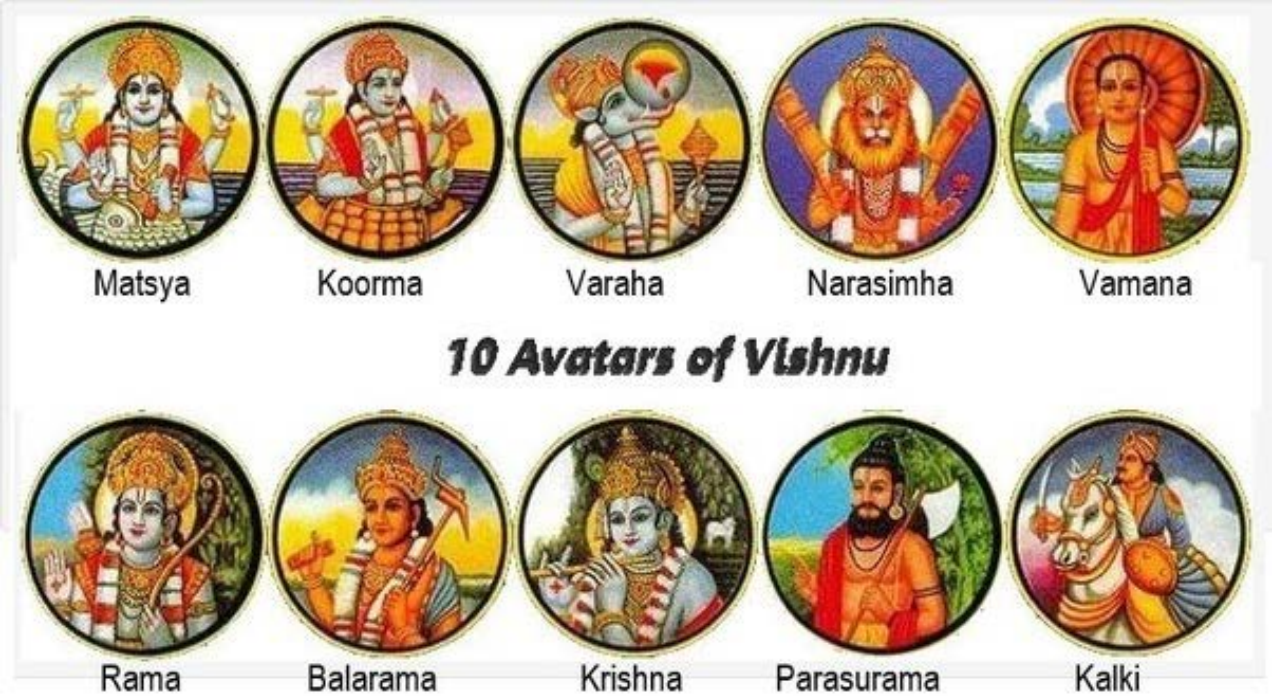
Compiled by Kidambi Raj

INTRODUCTION

Matsya Narayana or Vedanarayana Temple as it is called, is a Hindu Temple in *Nagalapuram* in Andhra Pradesh, India. It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the form of *Matsya* (Fish), the first of the Ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu called the *Dasavataram*. The Deity here is referred as Matsya Narayana or Veda Narayana. This temple comes under the administration of the Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam. *Nagalapuram* is a village in Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh. Nagalapuram, the temple town was built during the period of Sri Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara empire regime, in memory of his mother, *Nagala Devi*. Hence, this place which was originally known as *Hariganadapuram* came to be known as *Sri Nagalapuram*.

SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF DASAVATARA

The Divine purpose of the ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu, was the restoration of Dharma or righteousness. Lord Vishnu takes these Avatars to save the people from evils, demons or Asuras. Also, there is real significance in all the avatars and the order in how they came about. *Matsya* (Fish) is regarded as the first Avatar. This is because life began in water. Then came the second Avatar, *Kurma* (Tortoise). This is because life moved from water to land, amphibian. So, the Tortoise denoted the evolution of life from sea to land. The third Avatar was, *Varaha* (wild Boar), which means the wild animals with not much intellect and we call them Dinosaurs. The fourth Avatar was *Narasimha*, half man and half animal. This represents the evolution from wild animals to intelligent beings. The fifth Avatar was *Vamana*, the midget or dwarf, who grew tall and huge. The reason behind was because there were two kinds of humans, Homo Erectus and Homo Sapiens and the Homo Sapiens won the war. The sixth Avatar was *Parasurama*, the man who wielded axe and who was a cave and forest dweller, always



agree and not social. The seventh Avatar was *Rama*, the first rational thinking social being, who practiced and laid out the law of society and the basis of human relationships. The eighth Avatar was *Balarama*, a true farmer, who showed the value of agriculture in life. The ninth Avatar was *Krishna*, the Statesman, the Politician, the Diplomat, the Ambassador, the Interpreter, the Lover who played the game of Society and taught how to live and thrive in the adharmic and social structure. Finally, we welcome the tenth and final Avatar of Lord Vishnu, *Kalki*, the man who will be genetically Supreme (the Future of Civilization) to come at the end of the present *Kali Yuga*.

The above, shows how Thousands of years before Charles Darwin came up with his theory the evolution of species, Hinduism had it.

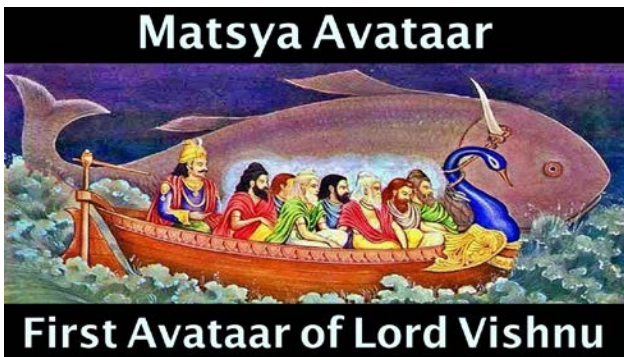
STORY BEHIND MATSYA AVATAR

As per the Hindu Mythology, it is said that when the end of *Satya Yuga* was approaching, Gods collectively decided to flood the earth and prepare it for the process of renovation. Lord Brahma was given all guidelines for remodeling the earth and these guidelines are none-other than the *Four Vedas*. Then Lord Brahma decided to rest before this great task. When He was fast asleep, a horse-headed demon named *So-*

mukasura came out of Brahma's nose and stole the Vedas from Him. Then Somukasura went and hid deep in the oceans of the earth. Vedas were required for Lord Brahma for the creation and so He prayed to Lord Vishnu for help. Responding to Brahma's prayers, Lord Vishnu took the form of a *small fish* and came to the small river where *King Manu* was performing his morning prayers to Sun God. Manu was a *Dravidian King* and he was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Then this small fish pleaded with King Manu to carry it in his pot, since there were bigger fishes in the river that could kill him. As soon as Manu brought this fish to his palace, it started growing in size tremendously. At one stage, due to its enormous size, King Manu was forced to leave the fish in the *ocean* and then he realized that the fish was none other than Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu then informed Manu about the *pralayam* (great flood) that was approaching. So, He ordered Manu to build a *huge ship* and take the seeds of all plants, the male and female of every animal, *divine snake Vasuki* and the *Saptarishis* (seven sages) along with their families in the ship. After giving these instructions to Manu, the fish went deep into the ocean to the place where the demon Somukasura was hiding the Vedas.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Matsya Avataar
First Avataar of Lord Vishnu

The fish fought with the asura and killed him, *recovered the Vedas* and handed them over to Lord Brahma. In the meantime, Manu completed building the ship and also brought the Saptarishis along with their families into the ship. As the end of *Satya Yuga* approached, there were heavy rains and the flood water washed away everything completely. The ship was *wobbling* in the storm and the huge fish appeared again and ordered Manu to tie up the *Snake Vasuki* as a rope connecting its horn and the ship. Once the fish was tied to the ship, the *fish guided the ship* in the sea and kept the ship safe during the storm. On the way Lord Vishnu taught the Vedas to King Manu and the Saptarishis. This way, Lord Vishnu fulfilled the purpose of the Avatar by saving the Vedas and the world from Deluge. It is said that, once the storms ended and the water subsided, Matsya Vishnu left Manu and the others at the Himalaya, where the human civilization began again.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MATSYA NARAYANA/VEDANARAYANA TEMPLE

The Matsya Narayana Swamy Temple holds immense significance to Hindu Mythology and religious lore. According to the ancient texts and legends, this temple is believed to be situated at the spot where Lord Vishnu assumed the form Matsya Narayana or Vedanarayana, to vanquish the demon Somukasura.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES: EXQUISITE CARVINGS & SCULPTURES

This temple has a rich history dating back to the 16th century I influences from various dynasties and rulers. The temple showcases a unique blend of architectural styles, including the Dravidian and the Vijayanagara influences, with intricate carvings and sculptures. According to Hindu mythology, this temple is believed to be the place where Lord Vishnu appeared to save His staunch devotee Prahlada. This temple reflects the Vijayanagara architectural style and has the main murthi, Matsya Narayana Swamy/Veda Narayana Swamy facing west. The sanctum sanctorum has the main deity with His Consorts, Sridevi and Bhoodevi on either side. The temple has withstood numerous challenges throughout history, including wars, invasions and natural disasters. Its longevity is a testament to its significance in Hindu culture and spirituality. The temple's main entrance is adorned with intricately carved gopurams, featuring elaborate sculptures of deities, celestial beings and mythical creatures. The inner sanctum houses a magnificent idol of Vedanarayana,

sculpted from black stone and adorned with precious jewels. The temple's mandapa is supported by exquisitely carved pillars, each depicting scenes from Hindu mythology and epic tales. The ceilings are adorned with colourful frescoes and intricate stucco work, adding to the grandeur of the temple's architecture. The outer walkways of the temple are adorned with bas reliefs depicting various Gods and as well as scenes from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The entire complex, is a visual feast for the art enthusiasts and history buffs, offering a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of ancient India. The architectural splendor of this temple is a testament to the ingenuity. The main deity of the temple is represented as a 6-armed deity having the upper half of Lord Vishnu with four arms. The two arms hold the *Sangu* and the *Chakra* and the other two hands are in *Abhaya* and *Varadha Mudra*. The lower half of the idol is in the form of *Fish* (Matsya). This temple is now maintained by Sri Matsya Narayana Swamy Devasthanam Samithi. The temple's design and layout are based on principles of ancient Hindu texts, reflecting a deep understanding of sacred geometry called *Vatsu Shastra*.



FESTIVALS AND RITUALS AT THIS TEMPLE

The Veda Narayana Swamy temple is a hub of religious activity, hosting numerous festivals and rituals which marks the opening of the gates to the celestial abode of Lord Vishnu, *Sri Vaikuntam*. Devotees throng to the temple in large numbers during this festival, seeking blessings and spiritual fulfilment. Another major festival is the Brahmotsavam, a grand celebration that spans several days and includes colourful processions, music, dance and elaborate rituals.

UNIQUE SURYA PUJA

The unique feature of this temple is the *Surya Puja*. During this time, the Sun rays would fall on the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum during the sunset (6 PM to 6:15 PM). This miracle happens only on three days in a year, (i.e.) on the 12th, 13th and 14th days of Phalguna month (Feb. – Mar.). On the first day, the sun rays will fall at the *feet of the Lord*. On the second day, the rays will fall *on the chest of the Lord* and on the third day, the rays would fall on the *forehead of the Lord*. The sun rays reach the Lord not through the ceiling in the temple, but from the entrance of the temple. It is still a mystery as to how the sun rays of the setting sun could sneak through the temple grounds

to touch the main Deity, which is *about* 600 ft. away from the entrance !!! It is believed that this event signifies *Sun God's* (Surya), *Seva* (Puja) to the Lord to warm up His chilled body, as the Lord has been under water for many years during His war against the demon, Somukasura.

SURROUNDING ATTRACTIONS

The area surrounding this temple is replete with natural beauty and historical landmarks that offer visitors a diverse range of attractions to explore. One such attraction is the Nagalapuram Waterfalls, located amidst lush greenery and rocky terrain. The cascading water create a picturesque setting that is perfect for nature lovers and adventure enthusiasts. Visitors can trek through the scenic trails leading to the waterfalls, immersing themselves in the tranquility of the natural surroundings. Another nearby attraction is the Nagalapuram Forest Reserve, home to diverse flora and fauna that thrive in its pristine wilderness. The reserve offers opportunities for bird-watching, wildlife spotting and nature walks, allowing visitors to connect with the natural world in a peaceful settings.

ACCESSIBILITY

This temple is easily accessible by road from major cities such as Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh). Visitors can hire taxis or use public transportation to reach the Nagalapuram town, from where they can proceed to the temple by foot or local buses. For those travelling by Air, Chennai International Airport, located approximately 90 km. away from Nagalapuram.

MATSYA NARAYANA TEMPLE IN HEGDAL IN KARNATAKA

Another temple with unique form of Lord Vishnu in Matsya Avatar is the Matsya Narayana Swamy Temple, located in the village Pinjar Hegdal in Hagari Bommanhalli Taluk in Bellary District. This temple was built in 1926 by Late *Sri Ambalum Buchi Venkatachar*. As per the temple history, it is said that Lord Vishnu appeared in the dreams of Sri Venkatachar and informed him that a Matsya Narayana Idol is at the Tungabhadra river bed. This dream repeated to him several times and so, he approached the *King of Anegundi* and shared his dreams. The King then retrieved the idol and gifted it to Acharya Buchi Venkatachar. On the procession of the idol, Lord appeared again and directed him to go to the village of Pinjar Hegdal. Acharya Venkatachar then met the devotees of Lord Vishnu in the village and requested for a piece of land to construct the temple. On receiving the land donation from the villagers, he constructed a small temple and installed the idol of Lord Matsya Narayana, Vishnu with four arms. The two arms hold *Sangu* and *Chakra* and the other two hands in *Abhaya* and *Varadha Mudra*. The lower half of the idol is in the form of *Fish* (Matsya). This temple is now maintained by the Matsya Narayana Swamy Devasthanam Samithi.



SPECIAL FEATURE

KURMA (TORTOISE) 2nd OF DASAVATARAMS OF VISHNU AND SRI KURMANATHASWAMY TEMPLE IN SRIKURMAM, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA



Compiled by Kidambi Raj

INTRODUCTION

The *Kurmanathaswamy Temple* also known as *Kurmanatha Temple*, is a Hindu Temple dedicated to *Sri Kurma*, the second of the Ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu (Dasavataram), is located in *Srikakulam Village* in Srikakulam District in Andhra Pradesh, India. This is the only pre-14th century Indian temple that is dedicated to *Kurma Avataram*. This temple is situated in the *Gara Mandal* of the Srikakulam District, which is located at a distance of 130 km. from *Vishakapatnam*. It is one of the Indian temples where the Hindu Deity, Lord Vishnu is worshipped in the form of a *Tortoise*, the other being, *Sri Gaviranganatha Swami temple* at *Gavirangapura, Karnataka* and *Sri Kurma Varadaraja Swami Temple* in *Kurmam* in Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. Sri Kurmam is 15 km. away from Srikakulam town and 12.5 km. away from the *Suryanarayanawami Temple* in *Arasavalli*.

ABOUT KURMA AVATARAM

This Avatar as Kurma (Tortoise) represents amphibians that can live in water and on earth. Based on mythology, at the time of *Krita/Satya Yuga*, all devas and demons (Asura) churned *Kshirasagara*. The primary purpose of this Kshirasagara was to obtain *Amrutha* (Nectar). For this Kshirasagara, *Mandara Parvatha*, was used as the churning stick and significant *Snake named Vasuki*. In the middle of the Kshirasagara, Mandara Parvatha fell inside the nectar. Lord Vishnu came to the rescue by taking the *Kurma* (Tortoise) Avatar and lifted the churning stick (Mandara Parvatha) on His back.

HISTORY

According to Prapannamrutam and earliest inscription of the temple, in Saka 1035 CE, *Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva* of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty of Odisha converted this temple to a Vaishnava Kshetra from a Siva Temple. The temple was built before the 1st century CE, in a fusion of Kalinga and Dravidian Architecture. Inscriptional history of the temple begins in the 11th-12th centuries. Ramanuja's disciples established Vaishnavism in the temple with the support of *Kalinga King Anantavarman Chodaganga*, the eastern Ganga King.



Srikurmam was regarded as an important centre of Vaishnavism in the medieval period along with Simhachalam and others. It was as the *Gurupita* (sacred place of the master) of the Ganga Kings of Utkala. *Naraharitirtha*, the disciple of *Madhvacharya*, was instrumental in making Srikurmam the seat of Vaishnavite religious activities. He also defended the place from an attack of the *Sabaras*, a group of savage inhabitants of the *Ganjam forests*. Srikurmam influenced the kings, the officials and Vaishnavite devotees to change their names in accordance with the religious faith they followed. With his close association with the eastern Ganga Kings, *Naraharitirtha* created the office of *Bhoga Pariksha* (religious head) with the aim of having the successive Madhwa Saints supervise the religious matters and pray for the welfare of the royal family and Kingdom. Currently, Srikurmam is under the trusteeship of the *Gajapathi Rajas* of Vijayanagaram.

LEGENDS / STHALA PURANAM

During the reign of *King Swetha Chakravarthi*, this area was referred to as *Swetha Giri*. Swetha Chakravarthi's wife *Vishnu Priya* was a devotee of Vishnu. When she was observing a fast on an Ekadasi day, Swetha Chakravarthi approached her with the intention of making love. When she refused, saying that the time was not ideal, the king became adamant. She prayed to Vishnu, who created a stream of water,

separating the couple. Swetha Chakravarthi was carried away in the ensuing flood and Vishnu Priya followed him to the hilly terrains of Swetha Giri. There, *Sage Narada* initiated an *Upadesam* of the *Kurma Narayana Mantra* and asked the king to pray to Vishnu by chanting the mantra. By that time Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of *Kurma* (Tortoise) avatar and the King's health deteriorated. Vishnu then made His Sudarshana Chakra make an impression in the nearby land, forming a lake. Swetha Chakravarthi bathed in the lake and regained his health, after which it was referred to as *Swetha Pushkarani*. Upon the Padma Purana, Brahma officiated the celestial rituals and consecrated the Deity with *Gopala Yantra*. Vishnu is worshipped as *Kurmanathaswamy* or *Kurma Narayana*, along with His Consort Lakshmi, who is referred to as *Kurmanayaki*. Later, a tribal king visited the Swetha Pushkarani and was impressed with it. After learning the story of its origin from Swetha Chakravarthi, the tribal king constructed a tank around the lake and began worshipping the deity regularly. The tribal king used to stay in *Sage Sampangi's* monastery, which is situated in the western side of the temple. Upon the king's request, the deity started facing West.



SPECIAL FEATURE



The *Sage Durvasa* visited the temple later with his disciples and the event was considered significant. Rama's sons, *Lava* and *Kusha* were said to have worshipped Lord Vishnu as Kurmanatha in Srikurman. In *Dvapara Yuga*, *Balarama* visited this temple and was denied entry by *Bhairava*, who was serving as the temple's *Kshetrapala* (guardian deity). Infuriated, Balarama threw Bhairava away from the temple premises. Kurmanatha learnt of this and gave permission to Balarama to enter the temple. Balarama, in resentment said that Srikurman would be the only temple where Lord Vishnu would be worshipped in the form of Kurma Narayana. Legends also say, that upon Vishnu's request, Anjaneya agreed to guard the temple.

ARCHITECTURE

Srikurman temple is known for its distinctive architectural style. The design of the gopuram is different from the regular style seen at other Vaishnavite temples. It has two *dhvajastambhas*, one the west side and the other on the east side, which is another rare element in a Vaishnavite temple. The upper part of the sanctum sanctorum is built in the form of an *ashtadala padmam* (eight-petalled lotus). Devotees can directly enter the sanctum sanctorum to offer their prayers, unlike the method specified by the traditional rules of Vaishnavism. The Utsava deities of Sri Govindaraja Swamy and His Consorts Sridevi and Bhoodevi were found in the Swetha Pushkarani in the 12th century CE. The Utsava deities of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were presented by Narahatirtha. All these idols of deities are located in a small room near the sanctum sanctorum are worshipped by devotees daily. The idol of deity Kurmanathaswamy is made of black stone, but due to the regular applications of sandalwood paste, it appears yellow. It sits on a platform made of stone with a length of 5 ft., a height of 1 ft. and a width of 4 ft. The idol

of the deity is 2.5 ft. long and consists of three stone structure. The stone representing the head faces west, the middle stone represents the body of the Tortoise and the small stone at the rear end covered with swirling circles, represents either the tail of the Tortoise or the Sudarshana Chakra. Besides the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Kurmanatha, there is a temple dedicated to Goddess Kurmanayaki in which an idol of deity Andal is found. *Hatakeswara*, *Karpureswara*, *Koteswara* and *Padalsudheswara* are among the temple's guardian deities. The temple's tank, *Swetha Pushkarani* is also known by the name *Suddha Kundam*. In the middle of the temple tank, there is small structure named *Narasimha Mandapam*. The sand below the waters of the temple tank is white in colour and is known as *Gopi Chandanam*. Legends say that Krishna played with the Gopis in these waters, after which the sand turned white according to a sage who saw them.

The temple has *108 ekasilas* (single-stone) pillars, with none resembling the other. They bear few inscriptions related to the royal lineage that existed in this are in the past. In the temple's premises, a Tortoise Park has been built to conserve the adult and young Tortoises, which are found in the foothills and fields of Srikakulam. Srikakulam is the only conservation centre for this species. Devotees offer these tortoises *gongura leaves* as a token of respect for the deity. The temple contains 42 mural paintings of Lord Krishna on its walls.

FESTIVALS

Srikurman is one of the rare Indian temples that follow both the Vaishnavite and Saivite traditions. Abhishekham is performed daily to the deity and devotees are allowed to participate in person. *Akanda Deepaaraadhanaa* (Lamp worship), *Nitya Bhogam* (daily offerings) and *Kalyana Utsavam* are regularly performed. Devotees visit the *Paadhaalasiddheswara* temple before entering the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Kurmanatha Swamy. Ancestor worship is famous in Srikurman, and because of this it is known as *Pitrukshetra*. People believe that their ancestors' souls will gain salvation if prayers are offered here. Because of this, hundreds of devotees perform ancestor worship. Devotees use the *Gopi Chandanam* while applying *thirunaamam* on their forehead. The three-day *Dolotsavam* is the major festival celebrated in this temple. *Kamadhanam* is celebrated on the first day, followed by *Padiya* and *Dolotsavam*. The annual *Kalyana Utsavam* is celebrated on *Vaisaka Suddha Ekadasi*. Other

festive activities include *Kurma Jayanthi* on *Jyeshtha Bhahula Dwadasi* and *Mukkodi Ekadasi (Vaikunta Ekadasi)*.

OTHER TEMPLES NEARBY

Some of the nearby temples are:

- Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Temple,
- Sri Suryanarayana Swamy Temple,
- Sri Padmanbha Kshetram,
- Sri Rama Kshetram and
- Srimukhalingam Temple.



ACCESSIBILITY T THE PLACE

Srikurman is situated on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, and is easily accessible by road, rail and air. It is about 12 km. from the district Head Quarters Town of Srikakulam, which is conveniently located on the National Highway No. 5 from Chennai to Kolkata.

- Travel by Road/Bus – State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) operates buses from Srikakulam Town to Srikurman Temple every 10 minutes and Non-stop Buses from Vishakapatnam to Srikurman temple every 15 minutes.
- Travel by Rail – Nearest Railway Station is called Srikakulam Road (Amadalavalasa Village Station Code CHE) which is on Chennai-Kolkata Trunk Route and Most Express/Mail/Special Trains have halts. It is about 12 km. from Srikakulam Town and regular city buses, auto rikshas and Taxis are available.
- By Air – Vishakapatnam Airport is the nearest and is about 115 km. from the temple.



COMMUNITY WATCH



Make the most of winter weather: enjoy ice skating, tobogganing and trails in Mississauga

This season, enjoy a range of outdoor activities with your family



Entertainment and activities

It's time to bundle up with a winter jacket, boots, gloves, a warm toque and head outdoors. If you're wondering what to do when it snows, the City has some fun ideas for everyone. Make the most of these winter months by spending quality time outside in fresh air. In addition to having fun, being physically active outdoors will increase your exposure to natural light and uplift your mood. Not sure what to do? Check out some suggestions below:

Visit an outdoor skating rink

This winter, try visiting all our free outdoor rinks – there's something unique about each one! You can also find more information on the city's new website. Not sure which rink to visit first? Check out the list below for suggestions.

Mississauga Celebration Square Ice Skating Rink (300 City Centre Dr.)

The iconic Mississauga rink is open every day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., weather permitting. Skate rentals and sharpening services are available on-site at a cost during certain operating times.

Skate rental hours

- Weekdays: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Weekends: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Check out the holiday schedule online. Please note: Holiday hours also apply to skate rentals onsite.

Skate rental prices

- Children (12 years & under): \$10
- Adult: \$15
- Helmet rental: \$5

- Skate sharpening: \$10
- Skate aid: \$10

**Please note: Pricing is based on two-hour rentals.*

Celebration Square is an outdoor rink that may need to close temporarily during periods of heavy snow or warmer temperatures. To confirm the rink is open, call 905-615-3200 ext. R-I-N-K (7465). To see how busy the ice rink is, view the live webcam.

For more information, please visit the City Skate website: mississaugaskaterentals.com.

You can also warm up on our heated patios. Skaters can also enjoy tasty snack at Dimkin Crepes or the Wow Zone. There is also free WiFi, making it easier for everyone to stay connected, post their favourite photos online or connect to apps they enjoy.



The Hidden Genius of Bacteria and Viruses: How Ancient Immune Systems Inspired Modern Genetic Engineering

By: Ariaratnam Gobikrishna

“The speed at which this vaccine was developed is a red flag,” my friend in Toronto remarked, referring to the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines. It’s a common misconception, one I’ve heard many times. However, this time, I chose to pause and reflect on how we truly arrived at this point in history.

This long, storied history began in 1831 when the HMS Beagle set sail with a young naturalist named Charles Darwin on board. His observations would soon lay the foundation for the theory of evolution. Darwin’s work was later complemented by Gregor Mendel, a friar whose meticulous experiments with pea plants revealed the principles of inheritance, ultimately leading to the discovery of genes and the identification of DNA as the hereditary material. In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick unveiled the structure of DNA—the iconic double helix. The 1970s marked another significant leap forward with the advent of recombinant DNA technology, which revolutionized numerous fields. This was followed by the advent of in vitro fertilization (IVF), ushering in a new era of reproductive medicine. A major breakthrough occurred with the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, the first successful cloning of a mammal from an adult somatic cell, rather than from a reproductive cell. This achievement paved the way for Shinya Yamanaka’s discovery of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), which transformed ordinary cells into stem cells, thus sidestepping the ethical controversies surrounding the use of embryonic stem cells. The 21st century has witnessed even more transformative advancements: Yamanaka cells have opened new avenues in regenerative medicine; CAR-T therapy has emerged as a powerful tool against certain cancers; and CRISPR technology has made precise gene editing a reality.

Let’s delve deeper into these major breakthroughs. For a billion years, viruses have been inserting their DNA into host cells, a process that



scientists have harnessed through recombinant DNA technology. Building on this natural mechanism, researchers inserted the human insulin gene into a viral vector (or plasmid), which then transferred the gene into bacteria, thus hijacking bacteria’s cellular machinery to produce large quantities of insulin. This breakthrough rendered the harvesting of animal pancreases obsolete, resulting in insulin that is cheaper, less contaminated, and less allergenic, since it is human rather than animal-derived. Other well-known recombinant products include vaccines, hormones, enzymes for cheese-making, and agricultural innovations such as genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Genetically engineered tissues, derived from induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), hold incredible potential for regenerative medicine. These cells, reprogrammed from adult cells using the Yamanaka factors, can differentiate into various cell types, such as heart, liver, brain, or muscle cells. In the future, these engineered tissues could be used to regenerate damaged or dead tissues, offering new hope for treating a wide range of conditions, from heart disease to neurodegenerative disorders. However, translating this potential into clinical therapies is still in its early stages. Scientists are actively

researching ways to refine these techniques and address significant challenges such as immune rejection, integration into existing tissue, and the risk of tumor formation.

If we can’t yet introduce entire tissues into humans, what if we could directly insert genetically modified cells instead? This is precisely what CAR-T therapy—Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell therapy—achieves. In this groundbreaking treatment, T cells are harvested from the cancer patient and genetically engineered to express a chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) that targets specific proteins on cancer cells. These modified cells are then reintroduced into the patient’s body, where they seek out and destroy the cancer. Remarkably, this approach has led to complete remission in many cases, particularly in certain blood cancers like B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL), offering hope to patients with otherwise intractable cancers. However, it is not universally effective for all cancer types and carries significant risks, including cytokine release syndrome (CRS) and neurotoxicity, known as CAR-T-cell-related encephalopathy syndrome (CRES). Researchers are actively working to expand its use to other cancers and to mitigate these severe side effects.



HEALTH & WELLNESS



In the development of COVID-19 vaccines, various approaches were taken to achieve the same goal. China's Sinovac vaccine utilized the traditional method of inactivated viral particles. In contrast, viral vector vaccines such as AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and Sputnik V used adenovirus vectors to deliver DNA instructions into cells. This DNA is then transcribed into mRNA, which instructs cells to produce the spike protein of the COVID virus, ultimately triggering an immune response. Meanwhile, the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines bypassed the DNA step altogether by using synthetic mRNA directly to instruct cells to produce the spike protein. This streamlined process facilitated faster production, greater adaptability to emerging variants, and fewer severe side effects compared to some viral vector vaccines.

The advent of CRISPR has elevated the excitement around recombinant technology to unprecedented levels. The story of CRISPR's discovery is fascinating in its own right, highlighting how a seemingly obscure bacterial defense mechanism was transformed into one of the most powerful tools in genetic engineering. After the Human Genome Project made sequencing more accessible, scientists decoding bacterial DNA stumbled upon repetitive palindromic sequences. These initially puzzling sequences turned out to be viral DNA fragments—essentially “mugshots” of viruses that had attacked the bacteria. By storing these fragments, bacteria could recognize and defend against future viral attacks. This system, known as Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR), along with the Cas9 enzyme, allowed bacteria to cut viral DNA with remarkable precision.

The potential of CRISPR is far-reaching. One of its notable successes is the treatment of sickle cell disease. Scientists have used CRISPR-Cas9 to disrupt the BCL11A gene, which normally suppresses fetal hemoglobin production in adults. This disruption is bound to increase fetal hemoglobin levels in patients, replacing the sickle-shaped cells that are inefficient at carrying oxygen and offering an effective treatment option for sickle cell disease. This process involves harvesting the patient's hematopoietic stem cells, modifying them with CRISPR, and reinserting them into the patient. While this groundbreaking therapy has shown promising results, the cost remains high, with early estimates around a million dollars, though this may change as the technology evolves and becomes more widely available.

In the future, in-body (in vivo) gene editing could significantly reduce treatment costs by correcting genetic defects directly in the tissues of living patients. While the idea of using CRISPR technology to edit germline cells (eggs, sperm or embryos) could theoretically eradicate inherited conditions like sickle cell anemia or Huntington's disease, this approach is highly controversial and currently banned in many countries due to ethical concerns. Recent advancements such as prime editing offer greater precision for correcting genetic mutations, but these techniques are still in the early experimental stages and not yet applicable to germline editing. The prospect of using gene editing to enhance traits like intelligence or physical strength remains speculative and ethically fraught, given our limited understanding of complex traits and the risks involved. As the technology advances, it is crucial to establish robust ethical guidelines and regulations to navigate this new

frontier responsibly, recognizing that the potential for misuse exists and must be carefully controlled.

In cardiology, families with a history of premature heart attacks due to high LDL cholesterol have found new hope in recent advancements in cholesterol management. Traditionally, monoclonal antibodies targeting PCSK9—a protein that reduces the liver's ability to clear LDL cholesterol—require biweekly or monthly injections. More recently, siRNA technology, such as inclisiran, has reduced the need for injections to just twice a year by using small interfering RNAs (siRNAs) to degrade the mRNA responsible for PCSK9 protein production. Although this provides longer-lasting control of cholesterol levels, CRISPR-Cas9 offers the potential for a more permanent solution. By editing the DNA sequence for the PCSK9 gene, this technology could potentially eliminate the need for ongoing treatments, providing a one-time cure for elevated LDL cholesterol. However, it is still in the experimental stage and has not yet been applied in clinical settings.

It may seem like I've taken a long and circuitous route to address my friend's concerns, but this journey ultimately demonstrates that mRNA vaccines are the result of decades of rigorous and meticulous development in genetic engineering. Each step has been carefully refined through accumulated experience, with missteps identified and corrected along the way. These vaccines are a product of robust science, not rushed or substandard efforts.

That said, it's hard not to be in awe of the brilliant scientists behind these advancements. Unfortunately, widespread cynicism toward science often arises from a lack of public understanding, compounded by the reticence of many scientists to step into the spotlight. In this vacuum, misinformation can spread easily. Instead of succumbing to skepticism, we should recognize the respect and admiration these innovators truly deserve. Their groundbreaking work is driven not by the pursuit of money and fame, but by an insatiable curiosity and a relentless drive to advance human knowledge. Ultimately, whether we realize it or not, we all benefit from their tireless efforts. These pioneers push the boundaries of what's possible, shaping a better future for us all—often in ways we could never have imagined.



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