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## MADE IN CANADA OR MADE IN THE US: BREAKING DOWN THE CANADA-US TRADE WAR



By **Harrish Thirukumaran**

### US imposes 25% tariffs on Canadian goods

On February 1, 2025, US President Donald Trump officially put into effect a 25% tariff on nearly all Canadian goods. This included a 10% tariff on select Canadian energy products. It has set off an ominous trade war between the two countries that have enjoyed a traditionally longstanding economic relationship. At the same time, Trump is also imposing a 25 per cent tariff on Mexican goods as well as 10 percent on Chinese products. It has added new complexity to a Canadian government, already fending off recent significant political challenges,

into further urgency. However, this has been paused for 30 days pending the outcome of negotiations between the US and Canada regarding border security. 2024-2025 Canada-US Relationship Canada and the US are the largest trade partners with nearly \$3.6 billion (US\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services crossing the border each day in 2023. About \$800 billion in goods and services crossed over the border between the two countries in the first nine months of 2024. Over the past few weeks, Canada-US relations have been showing some cautious optimism, focusing on resolving brewing trade and energy disputes, enhancing border security, and fostering environmental collaboration. Trump himself has argued previously that the US has

been experiencing a trade deficit ranging from anywhere between \$100 billion to \$200 billion. However, the trade deficit is only \$55 billion based on 2024 US government data. Additionally, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said that less than 1% of fentanyl as well as illegal border crossings come from Canada.

### Understanding and Safeguarding Canada-US Trade today:

The desire with this article is to look at the current, larger media landscape to see in what direction things are heading, to separate the facts from the evolving events in the situation. Hopefully, it can serve as a way for both Canadians and American readers to better understand the

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situation, and, by the same token, how to protect themselves financially as consumers. Specifically, it will be broken down into three sections: Canada's ongoing response, impact on Ontario politics, and the US ongoing response. It will end with a conclusion that lays out a reflection as well as next steps for readers to go forward with.

### Canadian ongoing response:

According to the NYTimes, Canada will be staging a three-part plan to retaliate against these tariffs. The choice of goods will be targeted towards Republican and swing states in the US which have voted for Trump. Most of the plan remains confidential with few details, but some key products include food and beverages as well as products like bathtubs. In a press conference, Trudeau says that Canada is imposing its own 25 per cent tariffs on \$155 billion worth of U.S. goods. These will include goods such as fruit juices, perfume, clothing and shoes. He went onto to say that the tariffs will take effect on \$30 billion worth of goods starting Tuesday, February 4 with a further \$125 billion worth of products being taxed 21 days later. Trudeau has stated that Canada will impose a 25% tariff on \$155 billion worth of goods. A third part could be restricting exports of more sensitive Canadian goods such as hydroelectricity that powers US energy consumption as well as critical minerals. The goal would be to put pressure on Trump's US administration to back down on its tariffs based on Canada's highly integrated supply



chains with the U.S. One expert, Ian Lee, an associate professor at Carleton University's Sprott School of Business, stated that Canada should refocus its efforts towards renegotiation of the US-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement (USMCA). It is scheduled for a review in 2026, but these recent moves from Trump could be a tactic to force Canada and Mexico to the negotiating table sooner. Regardless, it is reported that Canada's own strong economic fundamentals in policy as well as its close economic ties with the US can provide it with some considerable leverage in the ongoing negotiations.

Trudeau in his press conference has even voiced to Canadian consumers to be on the lookout for more Canadian made goods as they check product labels and vacation more locally as some simple ways to contribute to protecting Canada's economy.

### Impact on Ontario politics:

In anticipation of this ongoing trade war, Doug Ford, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader, called an early snap election scheduled for February 27, 2025, to secure a 'strong mandate' from Ontarians in response to Trump's

tariffs. "Our economy will feel the impact of President Trump's tariffs almost immediately, with hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk," said Ford. Indeed, as the heart of the auto industry, Ontario will bear the brunt of the tariffs being imposed here. CBC has reported that Trump has also even made clear he's going after Ontario's automotive industry, hoping to increase vehicle production at home. Additionally, he would end any support to that industry through the US Inflation Reduction Act. On the receiving end of this posturing would include the electric vehicle manufacturing industry.

The Progressive Conservative Party Leader promised to continue spending government money on EV and battery plants if re-elected, even if subsidies from the U.S. that Ontario has only promised to match disappear. Ford remarked that "I want to make it clear to every partner we have in Ontario's electric vehicle and battery supply chain: a re-elected PC government will honour our commitment to invest in the sector."

### US ongoing response:

Although Trump points to drugs

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and migrants spilling over its borders as the driving force behind these tariffs, there could be more than meets the eye with this current policy response. The Trump administration may need the tariffs as a measure to raise revenue as his government looks to extend and expand tax cuts, which could be one component of a broader framework, as recently reported by Politico. One of his Trump's nominees for chief economist, Stephen Miran, has himself wrote in November 2024 about the revenue raising capabilities of tariffs in relation to a currency offset in the US dollar due to overvaluation. That itself refers to an appreciation of the dollar roughly equal to the tariff rate to address inflationary pressures.

While Trump's current behaviour may signal him getting a head start on USMCA negotiations, this could be him trying to gain solid political support for his platform by providing adequate funding for his domestic policy agenda.

#### Conclusion:

The Canada-US trade relationship has been of the longest, significant partnerships in the world. With \$3.6 billion daily alone between the countries in 2023 for example, it has shown the highly integrated nature of both economies, and the vulnerabilities that this recent tariff issue creates. Canada under Trudeau has retaliated against the US under Trump with a 25% tariff to match his, but there has been a bit of breathing room for both countries as they agree to pause the tariffs for about a month or 30 days. Although Trudeau proclaims a Team Canada response, the situation has impacted Ontario politically with an election campaign underway, focused on protecting the auto industry in response to this tariff threat. While Trump has been foreshadowing this policy move as one of his major platform planks, the reasons behind it could be a bit of a smokescreen than what he has publicly voiced.

In terms of next steps, Canadian readers should heed the words of Prime Minister Trudeau on supporting the Canadian economy through this shaky situation. Please stay up to date on the latest

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information that comes from his government as well as reputable news sources and outlets. For Americans, it means taking a critical perspective on these developments by fact checking Trump's statements in relation to their own experience and that of the wider American society regarding its relationship with Canada. Ultimately however, time will tell on the sorts of effects these tariffs will take on consumers like you and I, and, equally, it shall note to us the clearest path

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# TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SCARBOROUGH



The University of Toronto Scarborough recently hosted a vibrant Tamil Heritage Month Celebration at its Highland Hall on January 16, 2025. The event, attended by approximately 200 guests, commenced with the traditional lighting of the lamp, followed by a land acknowledgement and the singing of the Canadian National Anthem and Tamil Thai Vazthu by students of Smt. Snageetha Kokulan.

The celebration featured a diverse range of cultural performances, including captivating dance performances by students of Smt. Nirothini Pararajasingam and Disciples of Smt. Vanitha Kugenthiran. The audience was also treated to an instrumental performance by Rishi Sriskanthan's team, as well as a presentation on Inner Awareness - Yogic Bliss by Ms. Suba Nagulanathan. The evening's entertainment was rounded out by a musical performance by Mr. Chippy

Krishnan and Ms. Sharon Thambiraj.

University officials, including Principal Prof. Linda Johnston and Executive Director Lisa Lemon, addressed the audience, while Director Celeste Richards provided closing remarks. Sivan Ilangko, who initiated

and led the global campaign to establish the Chair in Tamil Studies, also delivered a speech, reflecting the contributions of Tamils to the world over 2000 years. The event was expertly emceed by Ms. Niroja Arulanathan.

The Tamil Heritage Month Celebration at the University of Toronto Scarborough was a resounding success, showcasing the rich cultural diversity and talent of the Tamil community.





# Contributions of Tamils to the world over 2000 years

## Speech by Sivan Ilangko

*Given below is the full script of the speech by Sivan Ilangko, who initiated and led the global campaign to establish the Chair in Tamil Studies, reflecting the contributions of Tamils to the world over 2000 years.*

*Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,*

We are pleased to welcome you all to the 7th annual Tamil Heritage Month celebrations at the University of Toronto Scarborough.

As we gather here tonight, I would also like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a very happy new year and a joyful Tamil Heritage Month.

I am delighted to reflect on the remarkable journey that has brought us to the creation of the Tamil Chair at UTSC.

Following my initial conversation in March 2018, we launched a fundraising campaign in June 2018, which successfully reached its target in April 2021.

This achievement was soon followed by the University's international search for the inaugural Chair in Tamil Studies, resulting in the appointment of Professor Sidharthan Mounaguru, who assumed his role in May of last year.

These milestones were made possible by the unwavering support of the global Tamil community and the management and staff of the University of Toronto Scarborough.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has been part of this initiative and look forward to continued collaboration, which will enable us to support the advancement of Tamil studies and establish Toronto as a global hub for Tamil research, a goal we have envisioned from the outset.

To that end, we are committed to providing all necessary support to the University and the Chair, within our capacity, to ensure the growth and success of the Tamil Chair.

It is noteworthy that the University of Toronto Scarborough is the only higher education institution in Canada to celebrate Tamil Heritage Month in partnership with the community on this scale, and we look forward to continuing this tradition for many years to come.

As we celebrate Tamil Heritage Month, it is important to acknowledge the tremendous contributions Tamils have made to the world over the past 2000 years in fields such as science, architecture, medicine, literature, and more.

Tamil Siddha medicine, one of the oldest traditional medicines in the world, has been shown to have numerous benefits, including the ability to cure diseases and enhance employee well-being in the workplace, based on the breathing exercises introduced by Tamil Siddhar Thirumoolar.

Notably, research at the Medical University of South Carolina has demonstrated that Pranayama, a breathing exercise rooted in Tamil Siddha medicine, improves several key proteins in the saliva, which are important for managing stress-related diseases and improving overall wellbeing.

Furthermore, this research has shown that Pranayama can reduce anxiety and depression in cancer patients, highlighting the significant impact of Tamil Siddha medicine on modern healthcare.

Tamil literature is vast, rich, and ancient, with classics like the Thirukural, a text written 2000 years ago and translated into over 40 languages, widely regarded as one of the greatest works ever written on ethics and morality.

The Thirukural has inspired many writers and world leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, to adopt the path of non-violence,



which has had a profound impact on the world.

I would like to quote a Kural, which reads: “இன்னாசெய் தாரை ஒறுத்தல் அவர்நாண நன்னயஞ் செய்து விடல்” which translates to “The proper punishment to those who have done evil to you is to put them to shame by showing them kindness in return and to forget both the evil and the good done on both sides.”

These values, mentioned 2000 years ago, are still relevant in the modern world, and serve as a testament to the timeless wisdom of Tamil literature.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to University executives Professor Linda Johnston, Lisa Lemon, Celeste Richards, Nisbeth Ahmed, and Mary Stangolis for their continued support.

Once again, I thank everyone for joining us tonight and wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2025 and look forward to continuing to work together to promote Tamil language, culture, and heritage in Canada.

*Thank you.*

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# 18th Annual Canadian Tamil Congress Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage Month Celebration

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) proudly hosted the 18th Annual Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage Month celebration on January 18, 2025, at the Centennial College Events Centre in Toronto. This highly anticipated event brought together Tamil community members and local leaders to celebrate the harvest festival of Pongal and honor the rich Tamil heritage.

The evening commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, a symbolic gesture invoking prosperity and unity. This was followed by the land acknowledgment, the Canadian national anthem, the Tamil Thai Vazhthu and welcome dance.

The CTC President Kumar Ratnam addressed the gathering with an inspiring speech reflecting on more than two decades of CTC's impactful work. Highlighting key achievements in areas such as advocacy, community development, and cultural preservation, the President also outlined ambitious future goals, reaffirming the organization's commitment to uplifting the Tamil community. As part of the program, a special presentation titled "CTC Rewind 2024" offered a comprehensive recap of the organization's initiatives from the past year, showcasing its efforts in Canada and Sri Lanka.



The event featured greetings from a host of distinguished dignitaries, including Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Pickering Mayor Kevin Ashe, Toronto Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie and Toronto Councillor Jamal Myers, each commending the Canadian Tamil Congress for its contributions to Canada's multicultural fabric. Honorable Bill Blair, Minister of National Defence, and MP Shaun Chen were unable to attend, they conveyed their heartfelt greetings through messages. Deputy Provost of York University's Markham Campus Dan Palermo and University of Toronto Scarborough's Principal Linda Johnston also spoke at the event. Sri Lanka Muslim Expatriate Council (SLMEC) representative shared a heartfelt Thai Pongal message, underscoring the shared values of unity and gratitude.

In highlighting and praising the Canadian Tamil Congress's (CTC) accomplishments over the past 24 years, including successfully hosting the largest Tamil Fest for many years,



Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti encouraged the community to move beyond minor disagreements and work towards a brighter future for all. He remarked, "I was advised not to attend Tamil Fest last year. However, I went because you don't run away from friends during challenging times; in fact, you run towards them to provide help where needed—and that's what I did." Mayor Scarpitti further emphasized, "CTC's past accomplishments are a testament to its unwavering commitment to serving Tamils around the world."

A central highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards recognizing individuals whose contributions have profoundly impacted the Tamil community. The Service Excellence Award 2025 was conferred upon Mr. Velupillai Thangavelu, whose extraordinary journey and commitment to advocacy, intellectual pursuits, and Tamil nationalism have left an indelible mark. Over decades, he has been an influential trade union activist, writer, and community leader, passionately advocating for Tamil rights and social justice.

The Leaders for Change Award 2025 was presented to Dr. Soma Ilangovan, a trailblazer in Tamil cultural advocacy and humanitarian efforts. Dr. Ilangovan is a relentless advocate for Tamil rights, he founded the USA Committee to Stop Genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka and worked globally to raise awareness about Tamil issues. He is the founder of



Periyar International Inc. and a former President of Federation of Tamil Sangam's of North America (FETNA). Dr. Ilangovan's many decades-long efforts to preserve Tamil heritage, coupled with his progressive vision,





# CANADA NEWS

make him a deserving recipient of this prestigious honor.

A vibrant program added richness to the evening, with the highlight being the Made in Mullaitivu Fashion Show, which featured elegant handloom sarees crafted by women affected by war in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. This initiative, launched by CTC in 2020, has empowered women by providing training and sustainable financial opportunities. CTC's

Humanitarian Projects Coordinator for Sri Lanka, Thushyanthan R. Thurairatnam, detailed the organization's ongoing projects in Sri Lanka in association with the North and East Economic Development (NEED) Centre, including the Canada-Batticaloa Friendship Farm project, Dehiowita Tamil Mahavidyalayam Laboratory Building, Mullai Handlooms Centre and the Made in Mullaitivu showroom initiative, which supports local producers and products.

This celebration not only honored Tamil heritage and culture but also highlighted the resilience and unity of the Tamil community in Canada and beyond. The Canadian Tamil Congress looks forward to continuing this cherished tradition in the years to come.

*Photo Courtesy: Ninaivukal - Gana Arumugam & Tamil Mirror - Charles Devasagayam*





# CANADA NEWS





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## NAVIGATING TRAUMA AND STIGMA: SHN'S SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN SCARBOROUGH'S TAMIL COMMUNITY

**D**r. Senthuran Gunaratnam, a psychiatrist at Scarborough Health Network (SHN), recognizes the vital need for culturally sensitive mental health services. He typically sees 30 to 40 Tamil patients each week, highlighting the significant mental health challenges facing the community and the urgent demand for accessible, stigma-free support.

Dr. Gunaratnam points out that many of his patients bear the psychological impacts of Sri Lanka's civil war. "The conflict left deep collective trauma, and for many who immigrated to Canada, the stresses of adjusting—such as separating from loved ones, financial instability, and acclimatizing to a new environment—have intensified their mental health issues," he explains.

Untreated trauma remains a critical concern. "For years, discussing mental health has been a taboo in Tamil culture," Dr. Gunaratnam notes. "Many older individuals view seeking help as a weakness or something shameful for the family. While younger Tamil-Canadians tend to be more open to conversations about mental health, they often grapple with the intergenerational effects of trauma, compounded by the struggle to align cultural expectations with their Canadian lifestyle."

The Tamil community in Toronto is the largest outside of the South Asian subcontinent, with over 75% residing in Scarborough. This demographic reality influences SHN's commitment to culturally appropriate care, which includes interpreters, Tamil-language resources, and staff closely linked to the community, comprising many first- and second-generation Tamil Canadians.

In June 2024, SHN built a brand new Community Mental Health Centre at Warden and Eglinton, a significant achievement fully funded by donors through the *Love, Scarborough campaign*. The facility provides accessible, stigma-free

services, such as group therapy, psychiatry, and specific programs for youth and seniors.

The hospital network is now focused on another major mental health project: the development of a new Inpatient Mental Health Centre at Birchmount Hospital. This centre will centralize adult inpatient services on a single floor, increasing the capacity for patients with complex mental health needs and includes expanded psychiatric intensive care services, dedicated family spaces, and training areas for staff.

As Ontario's second-largest community mental health program, SHN serves over 65,000 outpatients and 7,500 inpatients, managing more than 10,000 mental health referrals each year. These figures reflect a broader necessity for equitable, culturally sensitive care in a region known for its diversity.

Dr. Gunaratnam emphasizes that initiatives like the SHN Community Mental Health Centre and the forthcoming Inpatient Mental Health Unit are essential for overcoming barriers to care. "These facilities not only provide vital mental health services but also help diminish stigma by normalizing discussions about mental health," he asserts.

While the Tamil community is already reaping the benefits of these initiatives, challenges persist. Gunaratnam believes that continuous

investment and community engagement are crucial for tackling the complexities of mental health.

"Our aim is to foster safe, supportive settings where every patient feels acknowledged and understood," he states. "Through projects like these, we are laying the groundwork for improved mental health care for all."

The Love, Scarborough campaign remains active in raising funds

to support these endeavours. To

contribute to enhancing mental health care in the Scarborough community, please visit [lovescarborough.ca](https://lovescarborough.ca) to donate.







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# All in the FAMILY

When a community  
hospital treats  
patients like family,  
magic happens.

BY GLYNIS RATCLIFFE

**TERRY SILIMANIS** and his sister, Elaine Makos (right), attended chemotherapy appointments at Markham Stouffville Hospital in 2024.

**L**ike many people, Terry Silimanis tried to ignore the physical discomfort he was feeling for as long as possible. However, in November 2023, after more than a year, the then 49-year-old road construction worker lost a significant amount of weight, found blood in his stool and knew it was time to see a doctor, even if he wasn't happy about it. "I don't like hospitals. If I needed stitches at work, it was basically some tissue and electrical tape," he says with a laugh.

The results of Silimanis's colonoscopy revealed the source of his symptoms—a tumour in his rectum. He was immediately referred to Dr. Sam Babak, a medical oncologist specializing in gastrointestinal cancers at Oak Valley Health's Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH). Further tests and imaging confirmed it was Stage 4 colorectal cancer that had spread to his liver.

"That was a complete shock to us," says Silimanis's sister Elaine Makos, who has served as his advocate and support throughout treatment.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, approximately 25,000 Canadians were diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2024. What's more, scientists around the world have been tracking an increase in colorectal cancer rates for people under the age of 50.

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 69

Canadians are diagnosed with colorectal cancer every day.

SOURCE: CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Although a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis sounds terrifying, advances in treatment and more precise surgical capabilities mean an improved outlook for many patients. "Generally, Stage 4 cancer is not curable, however that doesn't mean it's terminal," explains Dr. Babak. "In colorectal cancer, when we combine different treatment methods, we can cure some of these patients, especially ones that have limited disease spread."

In the case of Silimanis, the cancer had only spread to his liver, making him exactly the type of patient Dr. Babak is referring to.

## A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

In January 2024, Silimanis's care team—which included Dr. Babak, who oversaw chemotherapy, a surgeon for the tumour in his rectum, another surgeon for his

liver, a social worker, a nurse navigator, radiation specialists at another hospital and more—worked together to determine the best course of treatment. He potentially required surgeries for two different organs, radiation to reduce the size of the tumour, and chemotherapy to stop the cancer from spreading.

The appointments at MSH became something both Silimanis and his sister looked forward to because of the level of care offered by nurses and support staff in the cancer centre. There, he received chemotherapy in the Systemic Therapy Suite—which also offers immunotherapy and other supportive cancer treatments—in a private patient bay, complete with his own television.

"Honestly, they made chemo enjoyable for him," says Makos. "If you had questions, they weren't afraid to answer. If you wanted a hug, they'd give you a hug. They were like family."

The continued expansion of MSH's cancer centre, which is made possible by the community's generous support through Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation, is vital for delivering compassionate care to this growing region.

## COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Not every community hospital has access to the wide variety of advanced treatments and surgeries needed for complex cancer cases. While MSH has

an exceptional team of oncologists and surgeons, diagnosing certain cancers and providing the most effective treatments available can be challenging. To bridge that gap, in November 2023, MSH became the fourth cancer centre to partner with the Princess Margaret Cancer Care Network. "The collaboration has enhanced our ability to refer patients to comprehensive survivorship programs, obtain second opinions and refer patients to clinical trials," notes Dr. Mateya Trinkaus, another medical oncologist at MSH.

Within Canada, the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre (PMCC) offers unparalleled access to clinical trials. Ultimately, the goal is to co-partner with PMCC to run some of these trials with joint monitoring, drug administration and patient assessments in Markham.

"Travelling to Toronto is a major obstacle for many patients," adds Dr. Trinkaus. "We hope this goal becomes a reality in the near future so patients can have access to that groundbreaking research closer to home."

## A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITIES

After a course of chemotherapy, Silimanis underwent radiation to shrink the tumour as much as possible to save his sphincter and rectum. Unfortunately, due to a lack of response to the treatment and the symptoms he was experiencing as a result of the tumour's location, radiation was cut short.

"I basically hit rock bottom doing radiation," he says. "But that's how you show your colours and bounce back. I just said, 'Screw it, do the surgery.'"

In August 2024, Silimanis had an operation to remove the cancerous tumour, his rectum and one foot of his colon. He also had a colostomy—a surgical procedure to cut an opening in the large intestine for stool to drain from your colon and out of a hole in your abdomen into a bag. While the recovery process has been challenging, Dr. Babak has been impressed with his progress. The next step is an MRI and CT scan of his liver to determine how much additional surgery is possible.

"I think he's going to have a good outcome," Dr. Babak says. "I'm just giving him everything possible to get there."

Silimanis knows Dr. Babak and the rest of the MSH team are rooting for him, too. "He cares. They all care—they know me by name at the clinic, and we joke around every time I'm there. It feels like home now." ■



**DR. SAM BABAK** treats Oak Valley Health patients who have a wide range of cancers, including colorectal cancer.





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# 18A Memorable and an Incomparable Experience and Incident in My Aviation Career 50 Years To This Date

By: Kane Siva

This is another saga of my life in the vast blue skies of. I am sure the majority of my friends could not have known or heard this episode. People may have different views of my penning, it is alright, but want to say this, want to keep my records straight. I never manufacture these utterances only sharing my personal experiences which was catapulted purely on one thing and only one thing, which I like to keep it to myself, except to say this “Did not like who I am or my name. The bitter experiences I went through early in my aviation journey made me more resolute, resilient and robust mentally and modelled me to face so many challenges later in my career.

This experience taught me many good lessons, “Always Do It Right, No Matter What”. I always did and still do.

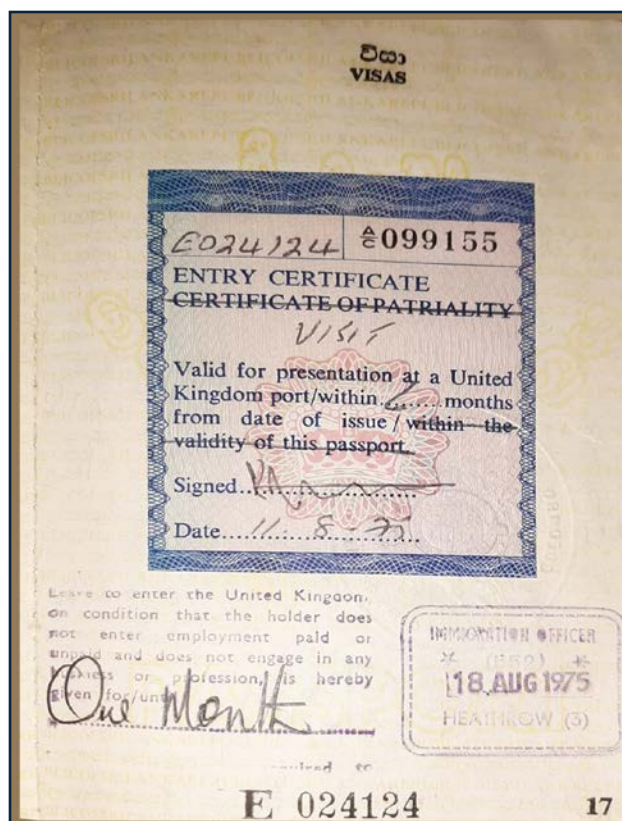
Folks when I joined Air Ceylon in 1972 purely and purely on meritocracy and after a month only I came to know that as a member of staff I was entitled to a free flight every year on the routes we operated and after 5 years, 2 free flights a year during our annual vacation. The best and the worst part, the flight was free but the money you had to spend during your holidays was difficult to come by for low-income people, except the meager savings you make out of your salary if you can. But at Air Ceylon we had an EPF fund, and you could take a certain percentage as a loan and that get deducted every month out of your salary. It was hard on our pockets but at the same time never wanted to miss our free flights.

Knowing Sri Lankans and their ingenuity to make money, a lot of us manage to cover at least half of the money spent, by purchasing certain goods cheaper and sell it off with 50 or 100% profit provided you make it through airport customs officers. Some of the officers were nice enough to allow you with a minimum duty, alas there were some nasty ones who got pleasure by imposing the maximum duty. Thanks to God since I worked at the airport most of them were nice to me and it so happened I helped my friends with the generosity of these custom officers.

My first free flight out of the country was in July 1973 when I flew to Chennai (Madras) and stayed at his home free. Then in 74 went to Malaysia and Singapore. My mother's sister was living there and it was a real experience.



The incident that gave me a taste of how people can stoop down to mudslinging and character assassination to bring a person down to achieve their dreams. I was planning to travel England on my vacation on the 15th of August in 1975. The IATA rule is whenever you fly as a passenger on a gratis ticket, you normally fly as a “Sub-load passenger” this means the fare paying passengers will be given the first preference for the aircraft seats and if and when there are seats available only the staff passengers will be taken. If there are no seats you will have to try for another date



and day. Our flights to the European destinations were operated in a pool partnership with the UTA French Airlines. It was a wet lease agreement we call it in aviation parlance, where

UTA provided 2 DC-8 aircraft with their Cockpit crew and Sri Lanka facilitated the Cabin crew and were trained by UTA staff.

Under this partnership UTA would train our cockpit crew. Few were trained as First officers or co-pilots and few as flight engineers. It was one of the best pool partnerships of Air Ceylon since its formation in 1947 under the tenure and chairmanship of late Sam Silva, an astute Lawyer whom I always held in high esteem because of this pool partnership. Basically, the flight was controlled by the UTA station manager at the airport BIA, late Sam Talayaratnae, even though the checking of the passengers, accepting cargo and other basic handling of the flight was carried out by the Air Ceylon staff. The Flight Planning was done by UTA and our flight operations staff were the coordinators for the Cockpit crew with Sam. The crew rostering was done by Air Ceylon flight operations staff. Basically, I was the man from Air Ceylon flight operations handling mainly the DC-8 flights and our operations manager and senior flight operations late Ajantha entrusted me with this task and never failed in my commission.

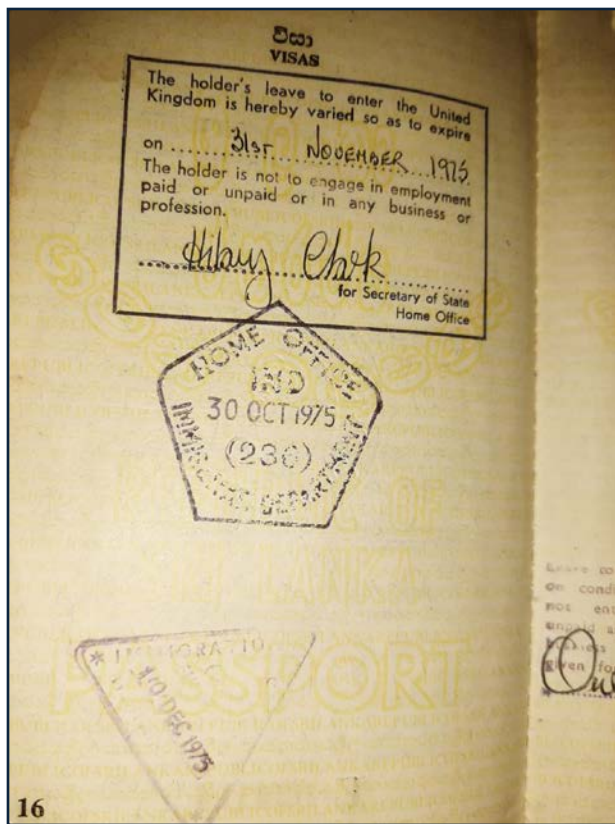
Now let me fly through as to what that this memorable incident happened to me on the 15th 17th August 1975. I made my reservation to travel to London Heathrow as a Sub-load passenger with our reservation and was number 1 on the list. I went to the airport and was told by Sam “Blue flight is “chockablock” but for sure I will take you on the Sundays flight August 17th and I returned to my home at Borella. We went to the airport on the 17th of August and accepted for





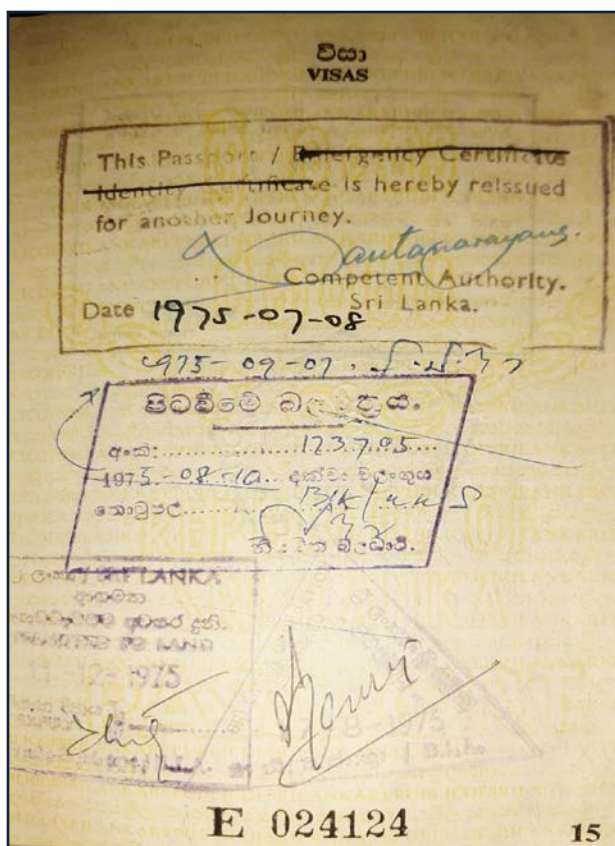
Aviation & Airlines

SPECIAL FEATURE



the flight to London with few other sub-load passengers condition if there were no seats out of Karachi to Paris, we were to be offloaded and sent back to Colombo. Sam Talayaratrae was careful to accept the sub-load passengers at the last minute and as a result the cargo hold for the baggages was closed. Fortunately, my bag was helped into the cargo hold by my good friends and colleagues G.A. Fernando Duleep Vethavanam (Both of them retired as senior captains from Sri Lankan Airlines) and late Velu a UTA ground staff. My flight coupon was uplifted by Sam at the last minute and handed over to AirCeylon load sheet officer who is still around.

The flight reached Karachi, and the PIA traffic staff requested all the staff passengers to disembark. There was a flight deck crew change in Karachi and a new set of crews took over the flight



to Paris. A French Captain and the First officer were Lucian Ratnayaka (Retired as a Senior Captain from Singapore Airlines and Sri Lankan airlines). The moment Lucian saw me

told the French Capt. Trochon, our Blue from flight operations is on board the aircraft all the way to London. Captain Trochon promptly requested me to fly to Paris in the Cockpit and was on the Jump seat of the DC-8 53, as it had 4 seats. The other staff passengers who were offloaded flew back to Colombo and self-flew all the way to Paris and then to London.

Landing at London Heathrow on the 18th of August in 1975 gave me a new experience and dimension in life. My friend Shakespeare, who was our station manager, received me at the airport as I had already arranged to stay with him at his home in Edgware, Middlesex. He wanted me to wait as he had to wait till the flight departed in the afternoon back to Sri Lanka. It was a long wait and worth it. While waiting for Shakes walked into W.H. Smiths at the airport and asked for a single Cigarette as I used to smoke and the sales lady was very kind enough and said, "We don't sell single cigarette", you have to buy a packet and had only few Sterling pounds and didn't want to spend it unnecessarily. She was nice enough to handover me a single from her personal packet. This was a real personal experience, and I will never forget this. Late in the afternoon I went with Shakes to his home after he finished the flight. Every day when Shakes went to the airport, he would drop me at some point, and I would walk around the streets of London and look for a job to work. In the meantime, in Colombo the "Rumour Mills" of my friends were active 24 hours, spread a formidable and credible rumour and said that I had stowed away to London as I wanted to run away from Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka airline employees Union President and the secretary were really active to spread these false rumours. All the 4 flight operations officers were in any of these unions. The union convinced our Personnel Manager late T.S.de Fonseka and I was interdicted with my friend Duleep Vethavanam saying that Vetha helped me to leave Sri Lanka. I was so upset and wasn't aware of this about for 2 weeks till a friend of mine dispatched a letter through a crew member. Late Reggie Santiapillai was our country manager in London at that time and he said, "Blue if they interdicted you, they should call you back to Colombo and if not, you continue your holidays in England". In the meantime, I found a Job in Ealing Broadway, at Rummors Tavern, a branch of the famous hotel chains, THF, as a Kitchen Porter and washing the plates and crockery items. I worked 7 days a week and made 75 Sterling Pounds a week after paying taxes. I moved closer to the Pub and was sharing a place with my friends from Aquinas days. Eventually I got an own place, paying 5 Sterling a week. Life was going well and experienced lots of new avenues.

Alas in Sri Lanka the perpetrators

of these rumours built a concrete platform to substantiate it. They got a hold of a news reporter from Daily Mirror, I believe, and published a news item regarding this "Air Ceylon Employee Stowed Away To England On An AirCeylon Flight". Unfortunately, I couldn't get a copy of it at that time. With all these Kalabloo my friend Vetha was reinstated after one month and I continued my stay in England. My late father was adamant that I should come back and clear all these unwarranted rumours. I went on 2 months accumulated leave but stayed for 4 months and finally arrived in Sri Lanka on the 5th of December. The rumour mongers did not rest, called the customs officers and informed me that I had smuggled some precious items to the Island. A CID officer in charge at the airport who knew me well on arrival checked my passport and took photocopies for their records and said "Blue your colleagues at AirCeylon spread all these rumours and mentioned few names and I thanked him wholeheartedly. At the customs, another officer checked my bags and confirmed the call they received regarding my arrival and gave me a safe passage through the customs arrival and I went to my room at Borella. The next day I presented myself to the personnel manager. The personnel manager could not swallow the fact that I was interdicted on false propaganda. I was reinstated the very next day. To save his skin he sent me a letter saying that my free flights were suspended as a punishment for 18 months. I was wondering at that time "punishment for what crime"?. Knowing these guys well I never contested the letter that was sent. The personnel manager had a big ear for the Union president and secretary. To utter disbelief, AirCeylon in 1976 commenced operating flights to Sharjah, UAE. They did not have proper flight operations and staff to handle our flights. One of the 4 officers travelled on duty on every flight as flight deck crew and returned the next day. I was sent on familiarization flights to London Heathrow, Singapore, Malaysia, Bangkok and was stationed in Bahrain for 2 weeks for DC-8 operations. I would say in reality this was a real vindication of my innocence.







# THE PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

The Peace Education Program for High Schools and Universities (PEP EDU) is designed to promote critical and creative thinking, genuine reflection and thoughtful discussion, while helping students develop greater personal awareness and resilience. The Prem Rawat Foundation (TPRF) makes the workshop series available free of charge and provides support and guidance for facilitating the workshops virtually or in person.

Developed for students starting at age 14, each of the 10 sessions features 20-30 minutes of engaging video content on the themes of Peace, Appreciation, Inner Strength, Self-Awareness, Dignity, Choice, Hope, Clarity, Understanding and Contentment. The workshop format also includes discussion topics and reflection activities to enhance student learning. Accompanying print materials include a one-page article on each theme, a Student Workbook, an Educator's Guide, and detailed Session Plans.

The content is drawn from author and peace educator Prem Rawat's international presentations, media interviews, and interactions with a diverse range of audiences. The content is neither religious nor political.

## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS

The Peace Education Program supports educational standards for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies in Self-awareness, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making, Self-management and Relationship Skills.

## "Evaluation of the Peace Education Program for Schools"

In April 2022, an Impact Assessment of the Peace Education Program at schools in the U.S., U.K. and New Zealand found that the PEP EDU course "will make a positive difference in most participants' lives." Both quantitatively and qualitatively, students in the study strongly endorsed the course, with 100% reporting that "the program helped them in their lives" and 82% recommending the course to others. Teachers reported that the program "complemented other learning activities, improved academic performance, student attitudes and self-awareness."



 The Prem Rawat Foundation

### 52-page Workbook

It provides four pages of course materials for each of the 10 themes, covering content, discussion topics and activities that support reflection and retention.

### For Educators

### Downloadable Course Videos

Engaging videos exploring each of the 10 themes.

### 82-page Educator's Guide

This Guide includes all of the content noted above, plus additional context and guidance for facilitators.

### Session Plans

The session plans contain over 60 pages of carefully detailed suggestions for flexible planning, smooth presentation and interactive discussion of each theme.

### About The Prem Rawat Foundation (TPRF)

The Prem Rawat Foundation makes the Peace Education Program available free of charge and provides support and guidance for facilitating the workshops virtually or in person. Since 2012, the course has been presented to over 400,000 people in 80 countries and translated into 40 languages. TPRF also has several other humanitarian initiatives to provide food, water and other aid to people in need, earning the highest rankings from independent charity evaluators for transparency, financial accountability and leadership.

## "An Evaluation of the Facilitator Experience of the Peace Education Program (EDU)"

In 2023 an evaluation of the Peace Education Program EDU facilitator experience across schools in India, Australia, New Zealand, United States and England reported strong endorsements for how the program benefits students across different ages and cultures by focusing on self-reflection and universal considerations. The evaluation was produced by Tātai Angitu, Institute of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

## "Impact Evaluation of the Peace Education Program

on Students of the Unihorizonte University Foundation of Bogotá, Colombia"

In 2021 the Unihorizonte University Foundation of Bogotá, Colombia completed an impact evaluation of the Peace Education Program on students, finding that the program helped nearly all of them recognize and be more aware of their internal resources as valuable tools for their lives. Attitudinal changes included enhanced appreciation for life; behavioral changes included empowerment to make changes in one's own life, and in relating to others.

## Resources for The Peace Education Program for High Schools and Universities For Students





# Truths that live in words



By: J A Rajah

1. The crown of a good disposition is humility - Arabian proverb
2. There is no fire like passion, there is no shark like hatred,  
there is no snare like folly, there is no torrent like greed. - Buddha
3. The wise man has long ears, big eyes and a short tongue - Russian Proverb
4. Forewarned, forearmed, to be prepared for half the victory - Cervantes.
5. Common sense in an uncommon degree is what the world calls wisdom  
- Coleridge.
6. Talents are best nurtured in solitude; character is best formed in the stormy  
bellows of the world. - Goethe
7. Good humor is one articles of dress one can wear in society. - Thackeray
8. Health and cheerfulness mutually beget each other. - Addison
9. He who sings frightens away all his ills. - Spanish saying.
10. Wisdom thoroughly learned will not be forgotten. - Pythagoras.





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Thulasi Muttulingam Yesterday at 2:34 AM



I used not to know what to say to people battling grief.  
 I still don't.  
 Mainly because there is no such thing as the perfect thing to say, anyway.  
 Except perhaps, "I am here for you in any way you need me."  
 As a socially awkward person, I thought I was missing out on some social rubric that I need to perfect.  
 I showed up for loved ones but not knowing what to say, would just sit awkwardly next to them.  
 Some reached out later to say I had helped them and I wondered if they were just being polite amidst their own grief.  
 This helps explain it.  
 Some people have the gift of gab.  
 I don't.  
 Especially at times like these, perhaps that's just as well.

Thulasi Muttulingam January 31 at 3:52 AM · YouTube



YOUTUBE.COM

Trump Aims to Deport Hamas Supporters on Campus - Barred Jewish Columbia University Professor Reacts

"Never again" they always say after every human atrocity.  
 Never again, they chanted worldwide, at embassies and events commemorating the Holocaust earlier this week on Holocaust remembrance Day - while actively removing jews from their own history and insulting them at their own events - as the Irish president did.  
 Growing up, I often wondered how people could have been brainwashed into thinking jews were the mythical evil in their midst who needed to be annihilated at all costs.  
 Now I see it all around me.  
 The German public we are told, were brainwashed through years of Nazi propaganda. They were.  
 What many of us fail to recognize is that that propaganda didn't come from subterraneous mysterious "Alt right" figures.  
 It came from official governments and mainstream media of the day.  
 The Nazi party were socialists, Far Left actually, not alt right.  
 After having identified as a leftist ever since I knew to cognize the political spectrum, the daughter of a die hard communist who while sceptical of my

beloved father's uncritical endorsement of communism, still nevertheless identify as socialist, I am beginning to see how the Left can be a problem as much as the Right.  
 I don't know enough of Trump's policies to uncritically support him.  
 I do support all that I've seen and heard of him thus far.  
 Especially on this issue.  
 The way things seemed to be headed out west, I was genuinely fearing a blood bath, when white natives had had enough of far left lunacy.  
 I am glad at least the USA via Trump is turning it around without that blood bath.  
 I hope other governments can follow suit.  
 I hope the common people know to get their information from different sources than just the mainstream media too.  
 I see a lot of hyperventilation about how Trump is the horned devil when what he's passing are common sense policies designed to stabilise nations and populations, both internally and internationally.  
 Good for him.

Thulasi Muttulingam February 1 at 11:07 PM



Pirunthajini Pirabakaran February 1 at 10:29 PM

Displacements Tamils painful stories part 1 Oil on canvas

Thulasi Muttulingam January 31 at 3:07 PM



Whether one moves slowly or with speed, the one who is a seeker, will be a finder.

~Rumi ❤️

Thulasi Muttulingam January 30 at 4:18 PM

I have seen many people like this. I guess they recognize each other's humanity.







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# Door opened slowly

Original in Tamil

by Jaypal Rasiah

English version by

Siva Sinniah (*Thuraiyooran*)



“Barathi, is this your final decision?” asked Deepak.

“Yes, yes, yes whether you call me Barathi or Barathee, this is my decision,” Barathi.

“Why are you repeating yes three times, you are not in court.”

“I told once but you did not seem to understand, hence three times to make you understand”

“Why are you adamant like this?”

“I am not adamant, but you are”

“Do you think I am saying this without thinking?”

“Look here, quarreling is not new to us. As you go on speaking, what is in your mind comes out bursting. Words become harsh, then it hurts and finally bursts. So just leave it”.

“How can you leave it in the middle? This is not a thing to think about. When we were in

love you listened to me whatever I said”.

“That doesn’t mean that I have to listen to you after I get married. Some matters you have to listen to me. H1B Visa is connected to your job. H4 visa is connected to me. but this is connected to both of us and to a third person.”

“That is why I am telling you for the benefit of the third one.”

“Enough is enough, you are trying to stand on one leg like a stork and catch a fish. This is not correct.”

After my marriage I arrived in America, life was very pleasant for 1 or 2 months. I was very busy beautifying the new house. Time passed by quickly. We went shopping and visited places with Deepak enjoying for 2-3 months.

When she realized that she was pregnant she was shy and

full of joy sharing with him. He was also thrilled to hear it. Both of them enjoyed and expected a new addition to the family. After Deepak went to the office the day remained still.

In Chennai she was reminded of office work from 9:30 to 5:30 in front of the computer and arriving home on a scooter. Went to the coffee shop and spent time with her friends occasionally. She felt as though she’s in hell. She had no one to speak to here. Has to depend on Deepak for everything. How can you depend on WhatsApp for hours? How long you can talk to your mother on FaceTime. How to watch a movie you don’t like, over and over again. Not only did she lose her freedom, she enjoyed herself before getting married but also felt like a bird in a cage.



# Short Story

## SPECIAL FEATURE



There were minor arguments followed by silence instead of joy among them. The bed was not strewn with roses. I deserve this and more for quitting my job, where I was earning more than him, and getting married to him. She was reminded of her parents, who were overjoyed when the marriage was finalized to an American groom. She felt as though the house was empty. When her stomach started increasing in size like a balloon, Deepak used to gently feel it with his fingers and said pleasing words, which brought her joy and comfort. Now it seemed to be full of unsolved puzzles. When her wish to go home for delivery was turned down her wishes were shattered and mind hurt.

Studying hard to get good marks, must work in a famous IT company, must move to America to get a six-figure salary, get married, were Deepak's ambition as a young man. Now he wants his son to be born in America.

When Barathi agreed to get married to him and quit her job and was willing to settle down in America after marriage, Deepak was at the top of Everest in happiness. After settling down and learning that he's going to be a father, he was overjoyed that all his ambitions were becoming fulfilled.

One day he said to his wife "I like you very much".

"Okay, why are you suddenly saying so?" she asked him

"I just felt like that"

"I know that you are saying so, with something in mind"

"Yes, you are 100% correct"

"Okay, tell me, what is it?"

"When I proposed to you, you said yes. When I asked you to quit your job, you said yes. When I told you that we are going to settle down in America, you said yes, and you have to say yes to what I am going to say now."

"You come out with it. I will see whether I can say yes"

"Our child is going to be born in America"

Barathi never expected this. She remained silent for some

time and said "your home town is Nellai and mine is Chennai. For both of us India is our motherland. I don't think that for my child, a foreign land should be the motherland. Your thinking is not correct. America won't give my child Birthright and can't give it. It can give only citizenship and migrant status. My child will not have a motherland. Have you thought about this? If I say yes to your wish, I would have done a big betrayal to my child. No, I won't want my child to be born in India and particularly in Tamil Nadu. I will be happy to say that the birthplace of my child is India. I will be proud to call my son an Indian. 'One's mother and birthplace is better than heaven'. I would like to give this honor and joy to my child."

Deepak expected her to say 'yes' to his wish, for his child to be born in America as a citizen but when she refused it was a great blow to him. He felt very angry.

"I have watched you from the beginning. You are telling my child, my child. Is it your child or our child? don't you want to say so?"

"Okay I am sorry, yes, it is our child, but I want that to be born as an Indian."

"If so, don't you think I have an equal right in deciding the place of birth?"

"I don't think so, since I am the person who is going to give birth and the amount of suffering I undergo is immense. Our child must be born healthy, and the mother must have peace of mind and happiness. Hence the parents must be free from quarrels and must live peacefully, then only we will have an obedient and intelligent child."

"So, what are you hinting at?"

"I want to go to India for delivery."

"Okay, I will think about it," said Deepak,

"I have to be in India on August 15th, our independent day. I am now on my 7th month. So, book a flight today, please".

"I will think about it." He was not able to accept his defeat.

"What is there to think? if you book it now, you may get it cheaper".

He raised his hand saying, "you are talking too much" and slowly withdrew.

She was upset by his behavior and stopped talking to him.

Days moved sluggishly with breakfast, lunch and dinner.

He took Barathi for checkups monthly. One day she broke her silence and asked him "have you booked the ticket?"

"I don't like to book the ticket," he replied.

"In that case I have to ask my daddy to book it."

"Do it if you like"

"It is not respectable, and it is disgusting to ask him"

"You only suggested that, and I approved it. After all he is your father, It is not disgusting."

She suspected that his speech was not normal and asked him "Have you had any alcohol?"

"Yes, I have this as the result of an uncondescending wife."

"Do you have this drinking habit even before marriage?"

"No, I started recently, when you put an end to my wish."

"You have no shame. Once you start this habit, you can't stop it. Please stop this habit. My child will not like his father being called a drunkard."

She got so upset, she went into the bedroom and locked the door, cried for some time and slept.

When she got up in the morning Deepak had left for work. There was a flight ticket for August 15th on the dining table.

She called him on the phone and thanked him

"I knocked on the door you did not open. I thought about your sacrifice by quitting your job and agreeing to come to America and I decided to book the ticket. I acted as though I was drunk but you never gave up."

She gave him a flying kiss on the phone.

He asked, "what about the rest?"

"You come home, and I will give you a treat".





## SPECIAL FEATURE

# Traditions of entertaining of guests among Tamils



By: Kumar Punithavel

- whatyoumissedintamilclass.io

**1. Introduction:** Tamil is one of the oldest languages of the world. Thus, it has a rich heritage of practices and rituals evolved with time. 2000 years ago, a poet Kaniyan Poonkudranar visualized humanity as kin and world as his hamlet; யாதும் ஒரே யாவரும் கேளிர். Translated to English it goes as, 'World my hamlet, humanity my kin'. The prime tradition of Tamils is to treat all human beings as one family.

**2.** One of the main foci in domestic life among the Tamilian culture is to receive guests and entertain. The great Tamilian poet and law giver Thiruvalluvar says about this as follows;

Men set up home, toil and earn

To tend the guests and do good turns.

So here let us see how a guest is received, treated and entertained, while doing so we can see the rich heritage of the Tamilian race.

**3.** Greeting a friend or stranger with clasping both palms like worshipping and saying Vanakkam (வணக்கம்). In traditional dances of Tamils, they have many poses referred to as muthirai (முத்திரை), a sign language by which implying and conveying a message, in this case getting together. And the word Vanakkam may be referred to as மந்திரம் which translates to English as Mantra. The word Vanakkam in Tamil comprises the word va (வா) meaning come and inakam (இணக்கம்) meaning together.

This way of greeting while conveying the message of welcoming it avoids transmitting any virus by touching.

**4.** Receiving someone in the house, with (sembu) (செம்பு) (copper vessel) to wash the feet after leaving the footwear at the door. Interestingly the vessel itself is called sembu. Copper plays a huge role in maintaining many parts, if not all, (2) of your bodily systems. This includes the digestive and immune systems too. According to Emeritus Professor Anthony Wedd, copper is "almost everywhere, it's in most foods. There's no problem for people getting their copper from their diet because its main form is Cu<sup>2+</sup>, which is soluble in water: unlike iron, which can be tricky to get enough of". Still, getting as much copper in our diet as possible is important. As such, on essential nutrients, it's better to have more than needed, than too little. For this reason, drinking water out of a copper vessels may be beneficial. But what health benefits can you expect from having a copper vessel using it on a daily basis as follows:

1. It gives better digestive performance.
2. Aiding in weight loss.
3. Helps wounds heal faster.
4. Helps with arthritis and inflamed joints.
5. Boosting skin health and Melanin production.

**5.** Water is the ambrosia for the survival of the human race. It is not only used to wash the feet but also symbolically the ambrosia of the human race is handed over to the guest. Here is the couplet by great law giver Thiruvalluvar The genial rain ambrosia call; The world but lasts while rain shall fall.

**6.** Offering thamboolam to visitors. Once they are in and seated, thamboolam (தாம்பூலம்) is offered. It consists of Betel leaf, areca nut which is very conducive for digestion. Sometimes quicklime/ slaked lime is added which enhances the digestion.

**7.** Significance and purpose of Nirai-Kudam ((நிறைகுடம்).

a) Material used is copper or brass (significance of it has explained earlier)

b) Mango leaf: Of all the leaves the mango leaf has the tendency to absorb carbon dioxide and emit out oxygen for four days even after plucking which will have a positive effect on the environment on top of giving an aesthetic enhancement of the surrounding. (1)

**8.** Coconut- It is hard on the surface but soft within, implying however determined and hard on the surface one has to be soft within. There will be three spots like eyes on the top surface, implying the three forms of fire essential for human survival. The three are; sun, moon and homemade fire. It is also interesting in Hindu religion the chief deity Lord Shiva



## SPECIAL FEATURE



Shiva is said to have three eyes. It is also said that Lord Shiva may appear hard outside but soft inside. The coconut is also implying another wonderful ethic. A coconut tree returns the water that one used to irrigate the young plant on the base returns as coconut so many feet high in the sky. Further its timber is used in the construction, and its leaf used as thatched roof and fence.

**9.** Kuthu Villaku (குத்துவிளக்கு) is used in all religious ceremonies, as well as an illumination lamp. It is traditional in all TAMILIAN rituals to light lamps implying let there be light over darkness, the ignorance. The lamp flame always lights up implying the effort should rise up. The Kuthu Villaku will always have five wicks which too is to imply that may the five senses shine clear and bright like the five wicks.

**10.** During ceremonies it is the tradition to decorate with young coconut leaves called Thoranam (தோரணம்). There are two types of Thoranam one of which the arrow made out of coconut leaf will be pointing upwards suggesting it as a happy gathering. When the Thoranam arrow points down it implies a sad event is taking place. In these decorations mango leaves too, play a significant role by hanging between coconut leaves.

**11.** There is another tradition among the Tamils to have banana plants with fruits on both sides of the front gate. If the bunch is ripe, it implies there is a happy function happening in the house, and if it is raw fruits obviously a sad function in the house. If they are facing outward, it is a happy event taking place. Else, if facing inward, it is a tragedy happening in the place.

**12.** The Tamils have a simple way to warn the guest that there is an infectious disease in the house and to act with caution by a simple means. As a warning they will hang a small bunch of Margosa leaves on the front door post. The guest will either avoid the house or act with caution.

Margosa which is frequently referred to a Neem has many medicinal values and is used by the TAMILIAN community. (4). To name a few you may note:

**a)** It has proved effective against certain fungi that cause on the human body like, athlete's foot, ring worm etc. Such fungi problems have been difficult to control by synthetic fungicides.

**b)** It has been found Neem has antibacterial property in getting rid of food poisoning and many pus-forming disorders. This bacterium also causes secondary infections.

**c)** There is anecdotal evidence among TAMILIAN about its efficacy-particularly against pox viruses. Smallpox, chicken pox and warts have traditionally been



treated with paste of neem leaves-usually rubbed directly onto infected skin.

**d)** Due to neem's insecticidal properties, it is a common folk remedy against maggots and head lice.

**e)** Tamilians had from a distance past used neem twigs as "toothbrushes."

**f)** TAMILIAN doctors have been preparing treatment in oral doses for malarial patients for centuries.

**13.** In decorating the house receiving guests, Kolam (கோலம்), plays a leading role in the TAMILIAN nation. It is a decorative design in entrances and other places with rice flour. Interestingly it places a dual purpose giving an aesthetic beauty at the same time it feeds crawling ants etc. Especially in the rainy months of the TAMILIAN nation December.

**14.** Tamils serve the food on banana leaves, and they themselves eat on banana leaves. Let's note the reason and benefits of eating food served on Banana leaves (4).

- **Natural disinfectant:** Banana leaves have natural antimicrobial properties that help to kill harmful bacteria present in food. Eating on banana leaves can therefore reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

- **Nutritional value:** Banana leaves contain various essential nutrients like polyphenols, vitamin A, and vitamin C. When food is placed on banana leaves, some of these nutrients are transferred to the food, enhancing its nutritional value.

- **Enhances flavor:** Eating on a banana leaf can enhance the flavor of food. The leaves impart a subtle, earthy taste that adds to the overall enjoyment of the meal.

- **Environmentally friendly:** Using banana leaves as a natural alternative to disposable plates is an eco-friendly choice. It reduces the need for plastic or foam plates, which contribute to pollution.

- **Biodegradable:** Banana leaves are biodegradable, meaning they break down easily without causing harm to the environment. This makes them a sustainable choice for serving food.

- **Aesthetically pleasing:** Eating on banana leaf adds a touch of traditional charm to a meal. It can create a visually pleasing experience, making the dining process more enjoyable.

- **Non-toxic:** Unlike some synthetic plates' banana leaf substitutes, banana leaves are perfectly non-toxic. They do not release harmful chemicals or toxins into the food, ensuring a safer dining experience.

- **Boosts digestion:** Consuming food on a banana leaf can positively impact digestion. The polyphenols found in banana leaves stimulate the production of digestive enzymes, aiding in better digestion and nutrient absorption.

**15.** There are rituals in puberty ceremony, marriage ceremonies and funerals too with its inner mystical meanings and messages.

1) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mango-leaves-tested-microscope-shows-release-oxygen-even-after->

2) <https://drinkoptimum.com/benefits-of-drinking-water-from-a-copper-bottle/>

3) <https://www.ndtv.com/health/how-is-eating-food-on-bananas-leaves-good-for-health-4378841>

4) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234637/>





## SPECIAL FEATURE

# Love at First Sight MYTH AND REALITY

By: J A Rajah



### A. The Illusion of Love :

Love at first sight appears to be a favourite subject in films. In reality, it does not always happen. The ancient Tamil classic 'Ramayanam-Kambar tells the story of Raman, who falls in love with Sita at first sight. His phrase: annalum nookinan, avalum nokinarl', was a famous verse that captivated the minds of youngsters. In reality, every young man never fails to look at cute girls who do not end up in love. That is why love at first sight is more a myth and rarely a reality.

### B. Love: an Emotion enhanced by physical attraction :

Love, at first, has been a prominent theme in arts and literature for at least 3,000 years and is still common in contemporary media. The concept is widely known across cultures. In Western countries, approximately every third person reports having experienced it. The illusion is that couples create feelings to enhance that relationship. Falling in love typically includes cognitive bias that enhances the other person's perception and makes a relationship feel special and of continuing focus. The attraction is strong, but no romantic involvement follows. Couples in love might, therefore, project their feelings for each other at the first meeting and continue it as love at first sight.

(LAFS). Experiencing LAFS might also be perceived as inappropriate, either by the partner experiencing LAFS or by the target of the attraction. It might also prove to be a barrier to relationships and development. If people claim to communicate LAFS retrospectively from an established relationship, they reduce such risks. Many LAFS cases reported that they fell in mutual love with the person and developed a relationship with their physical attractiveness that consistently proves to be a strong predictor of attraction and partner choices. Initial physical attraction is a strong theme in LAFS narrations.

Love is typically conceptualised as a property of enduring intimate relationships.

### C. The Dimensions of Love :

Love consists of three dimensions: - intimacy, passion and commitment. LAFS is a distinct form of love that differs from love in a relationship. It is different from a romantic relationship. LAFS is infatuation. It is a feeling of intense passion without intimacy and commitment. Intimacy and emotional commitment evolve gradually over time through mutual sharing and understanding. Commitment or decision is deliberate devotion to a relationship. In other words, commitment is unlikely to be evident at zero acquaintance. Nowadays, youths

are influenced by social media, and they are prone to be encouraged to fall in love at first sight, which mostly happens to be an illusion. They fall off and on and fall in love, and many elders consider it a sickness common with youngsters.

### D. Love and Literature :

Love at first sight is a passing fancy. Some psychologists consider it a process in the emotional development of lads and lasses. One cannot entirely reject the idea as a passing fancy. In some cases, it has borne fruits. Literature shows that love at first sight was prevalent even in early times. Romeo and Juliet, Cius and Laila, Anarkali and Umar are lovers who have fallen in love at first sight. If love succeeds, there is ample scope for tremendous success in life. Social differences prove to be the leading cause of failure in love affairs. The idea of love, at first sight, is very popular with youngsters and still holds good for the fruitful relationship essential for a healthy and progressive society. The great Tamil poet Mahakavi Bharathy asserted that true romantic love is critical to cultivating the freedom of the human spirit. Bharathy raised the quality of romantic love to divine love. Bharathi's love poem- ' Kannama-en kaathali'- expounds his philosophy of romantic love as the bulwark for a progressive society.





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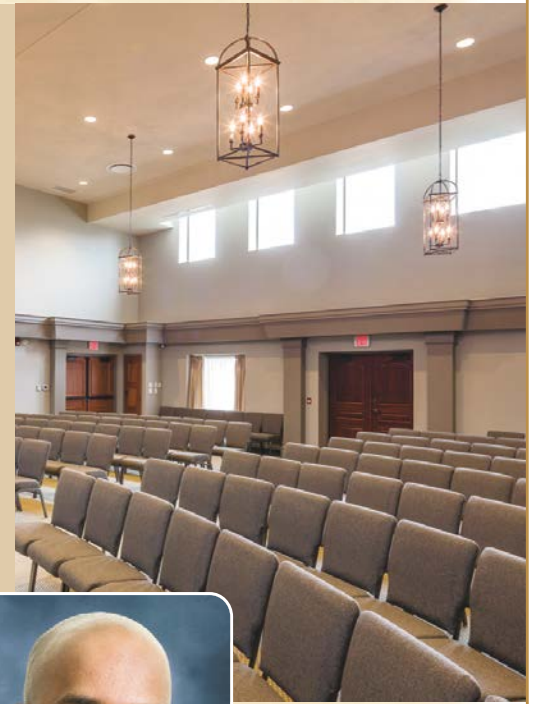


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# MY DREAM VACATION SPOTS!

**By: Raya Thushyantam**  
- Grade 7 Student

What are your three dream vacation spots? I have a wonderful list of three dream vacation destinations: the country known for its delicious pizza, the country with the beautiful Eiffel Tower and the city of gold. Can you guess what places they are? Italy, France and Emirates! Have you heard of a city in Italy that has waterways as transport? That's Venice, Italy. Italy also has a city that was buried under the land called Pompeii. Additionally, the largest standing amphitheatre is located in Rome, Italy. Another country I would love to visit is the country with the romantic language. France! A place I would visit there is Paris. Do you know a place created by King Louis XIV? It is called the Palace of Versailles. The last place I would visit in France is Mont Saint-Michel, a beautiful stunning island. The final country I would visit is the Emirates, the country of gold. Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world, located there in Dubai. Abu Dhabi, one of the safest cities in the world, is a place I would go to for a vacation as well. I would also visit the capital of the Emirates, Sharjah. Now, I'll tell you why I would want to go to these stunning places.

First, I would love to visit Italy, the country of pizza. The 3 cities I would visit in Italy are Venice, Pompeii and Rome. Venice has waterways as its road. The way of transportation is boats. Venice is built on 126 islands separated by canals with 472 bridges connecting these islands. Furthermore, the longest man-made canal is located in Venice. This canal is called the Grand Canal with a length of 1,776km. Next, there is the city that was buried under land. Mount Vesuvius erupted and covered Pompeii with a layer of volcano ash. Guess how tall that was? There was about 4-6m or 13-20 feet of volcano ash covering all of its citizens. This happened all the way back in 79 AD and was only rediscovered a thousand years later. Currently, there are many scientists discovering more and more. Lastly, I would visit Rome. It has the largest amphitheatre and was founded in 70-80 AD. The colosseum is one of the New Seven World Wonders. It has 4 stories and has enough space to fit 50,000 spectators! That's a little bit about Italy.

Next, I would love to visit France. I would visit Paris, the Palace of Versailles and Mont Saint-Michel. First, there is Paris. The main thing I would want to visit there is the Eiffel Tower. This was built on March 31, 1889. Eiffel, himself, had to climb all

those steps to put the France flag up. Guess how many steps it took? 1,710 steps! I would also visit Disneyland in Paris. It is the most visited theme park in Europe! Secondly, I would visit the Palace of Versailles. It was built around 1623 - 1624 and is 18 kilometres away from Paris. The original purpose of this building was a hunting lodge. Lastly, I would visit Mont Saint-Michel. This island is 4 km square. This beautiful island was once a prison! There is a similar island like this in the United Kingdom. These are the 3 places in France I would visit.

Lastly, I would visit the Emirates (UAE). Burj Khalifa is a must to go if I am ever there. The Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world and is over 828 metres tall! There are also 160 floors! When the Burj Khalifa opened in 2010, over 10,000 fireworks were shot to celebrate. However, in 2025, the Burj Khalifa won't be the tallest building. The Tower of Jeddah will open and is approximately 1000 metres. Secondly, Abu Dhabi sounds interesting to me. Abu Dhabi is known as the safest country in the world. Additionally, I would like to visit Yas Waterworld in Abu Dhabi. There are more than 40 thrilling water rides. It was opened in 2013. This waterpark has the largest six person tornado water slide. Lastly, I would visit Sharjah, the capital of the Emirates. The meaning of Sharjah in Arabic is "rising of sun". There is a modern aquarium in Sharjah featuring over 250 living species. It also includes a pathway inside of the sea! These are the cities I would visit in the Emirates.



As you can see, these places have phenomenal sights and many fun things to do. Italy has a city of waterways, a city that was buried, and the city with the largest amphitheatre, Rome. France has Paris, Palace of Versailles and a beautiful island Mont Saint-Michel. Emirates has huge buildings and an amazing aquarium. Now that you know the three countries I would visit, what countries would you visit?



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# FORBES NAMES CITY OF MARKHAM AMONGST CANADA'S BEST EMPLOYERS FOR 5TH STRAIGHT YEAR

Forbes

2025

CANADA'S

**BEST  
EMPLOYERS**

POWERED BY statista

For the fifth consecutive year, the City of Markham has been recognized as one of Canada's Best Employers 2025. Announced earlier today, the City of Markham is ranked 2nd among municipalities in Canada and 12th overall for Government Services.

"Organizational excellence doesn't come easy these days, it requires a strong commitment to employees and creating a culture of accountability along with embracing creativity and innovation. I am extremely proud the City of Markham has been recognized as one of Canada's Best Employers for the fifth year in a row," said Mayor Frank Scarpitti. "Ranking the 2nd best City in all of Canada sets us apart from many cities, thanks to our senior management and all our employees."

The City of Markham was once again named one of Canada's Best Employers for 2025 by Forbes and Statista Inc., the world-leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider, through an independent survey of more than 40,000 Canada-based employees working for companies employing at least 500 people in Canada. The evaluation was based on direct

and indirect recommendations from employees that were asked to rate their willingness to recommend their own employers to friends and family. Employee evaluations also included other employers in their respective industries.

"Markham is more because it's served by a dedicated and hardworking public service and this continuous achievement is a testament to our commitment to putting people first and the strength of our organizational culture that is rooted deeply in our City's strategic plan," said CAO Andy Taylor.

Markham's strength as an employer continues to lie in its commitment to its comprehensive People Plan which supports the City's strategic goal of delivering exceptional services by exceptional people with a focus on onboarding, providing continuous opportunities for development and learning, wellness initiatives, recognition, open communication, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion – as outlined in the Diversity Action Plan.

We are pleased and proud to be recognized along with a number of global companies with a large presence in Markham

including IBM Canada, Honda Canada, TD Bank Group, Tesla, Hallmark, Oak Valley Health, SE Health, AMD, Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions and General Motors. These employers continue to contribute significantly to Markham's reputation as a world class city offering high quality jobs, and attracting and retaining top global talent.

The complete awards list can be viewed at Forbes.

## About Markham:

Markham, an award-winning municipality with over 362,000 residents and the largest of nine communities in York Region, is home to over 650 corporate head offices and more than 1,500 high tech and life science companies. Markham is a leader in attracting foreign direct investment with more than 234 foreign companies located in the City. Founded in the 1790s, today Markham is Canada's most diverse community and enjoys a rich heritage, outstanding community planning and services, and a vibrant local economy.





# MY CITY AT WORK

The City of Richmond Hill is committed to providing excellent service and we are proud to serve the people and businesses in our community.

## Spotlight on... Richmond Hill's Cultural Services Heritage Team

Richmond Hill's Cultural Services Heritage team are the champions of our community's vibrant story. This skilled team is committed to preserving and celebrating Richmond Hill's unique history and culture. They expertly manage an extensive collection of over 10,000 artifacts which represent the City's social, political, and economic history from the early 19th century to present day.

This team brings Richmond Hill's heritage to life through a variety of engaging events and programs, including Walk and Learn, Doors Open Richmond Hill, Afternoon Tea, astronomy programming at the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory, summer camps and birthday parties.

Our Cultural Services Heritage team curates approximately three exhibits annually, thoughtfully planning and executing each one to ensure it resonates with visitors and enriches their understanding of Richmond Hill's cultural heritage. The team ensures our history is preserved and celebrated, connecting past, present and future generations.



recreational items, each telling its own part of the City's story. Many of these items have been digitized for people to view and enjoy virtually.

### Putting your tax dollars to work

In 2025, Richmond Hill will keep only approximately 28% of residential property taxes collected. Richmond Hill Council controls only the local portion of taxes.

The rest of your taxes are sent to your school board and York Region to fund regional services such as public health, social services, children's services, policing, paramedical services and regional roads such as Bayview Avenue, Major Mackenzie Drive and Leslie Street.

Property taxes pay for a variety of Richmond Hill services residents rely on – fire protection, public libraries, parks and playgrounds, recycling, organics and waste pick-up, snow and windrow removal, local roads, land planning and so much more.

Here's how each dollar the City receives from your property taxes is allocated.

Fire and Emergency Services	- 15 cents
Road Maintenance	- 3 cents
Winter Maintenance	- 6 cents
Waste Collection	- 4 cents
Access Richmond Hill	- 1 cent
Recreation and Events	- 11 cents
Buildings (Arenas, Pools, etc.)	- 5 cents
Public Library	- 5 cents
Parks and Trails	- 4 cents
Administration and Other Services	- 20 cents
Planning and Development	- 7 cents
Asset Renewal and Capital Programs	- 11 cents
Information Technology	- 6 cents
By-law Enforcement	- 2 cents
Water Services - Funded Through Water Billing	-



Did you know? Richmond Hill's diverse artifact collection includes agricultural tools, home furnishings, textiles, and

This graphic shows how each dollar of property tax that stays in Richmond Hill is divided.





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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.

### TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH AND PONGAL VIZHA!

DTA started 2025 on a high note by celebrating Tamil Heritage Month and Pongal Vizha with great enthusiasm. The event provided a vibrant platform for local Tamil community members to proudly showcase their talents through singing, dancing, and cultural performances.

Sweet Pongal and a traditional lunch were served, adding to the festive spirit and creating a warm, joyous atmosphere. The celebration was a beautiful reflection of Tamil culture and heritage, enjoyed by everyone who attended.

This successful event would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of both adult and youth volunteers working behind the scenes. Heartfelt thanks also go to the executive team for their dedication and support in making it all possible.



**LOCATION:**  
DTA CENTER  
66 HARWOOD AVENUE  
SOUTH, AJAX, ON  
L2S 2H6

**PER CLASS**  
**\$5**

## YOGA

**CLASS FOR YOUTH & ADULTS**

**SATURDAYS,  
9:30AM-10:30AM**

**AGES 10 TO 54**

**START DATE  
SEPTEMBER 14TH**

**REGISTER ONLINE @ DURHAMTAMILS.ORG**  
TEL: 905-428-7007

**YOGA INSTRUCTOR**  
**MALINI  
PARARAJASINGHAM**

### YOUTH & ADULTS YOGA CLASS

“This yoga class is led by a highly skilled and exceptional instructor.”

**Yoga Instructor:**

**MALINI PARARAJASINGHAM**

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

**Start date:** Saturday, September 14th

**Location:** DTA Center  
66 Harwood Avenue South,  
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**)

### DTA'S HOMELAND 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.



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

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

#### OUR SERVICE

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

#### CONTACT US

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

Contact Number:

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

For More Information Visit Our Website:

[dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca](http://dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca)

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



### Durham Tamil Association Evolving Elder Care -in Home Support for seniors

#### Training

- Free Training and a certificate of completion from Computek College in Ajax
- 50 volunteer hours placement

#### Benefits

- Free Vulnerable Check
- Unlock valuable life skills with Free Standard CPR and First Aid Training
- Volunteer Travel Expense \$0.58/km
- Join us to make a positive impact on seniors lives while gaining valuable skills and experiences.

#### Contact US

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

- Contact Number:
- (647) 968-9549
  - (647) 286-9549

Durham Tamil Association  
66 Harwood Ave, S.Ajax LIS 2H6



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- Pickering
- Oshawa
- Clarington
- Ajax
- Whitby



For More Information Visit the website: [dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca](http://dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca)

### Volunteers Needed!

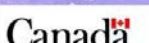


Join our volunteer team and gain more than just experience – unlock valuable life skills while making a positive impact on seniors' lives in Durham!

#### Volunteer Gala : Twice a Year!

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

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







### 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)

Tel 905.428.7007

(Unity Is Strength)

Durham Tamil Association

## BADMINTON

CLASS - YOUTH & ADULTS \*

JOIN US NOW!

Register online @ [durhamtamils.org](http://durhamtamils.org)

Location :

Dr.S.J. Phillips PS (625 Simcoe St N, Oshawa, L1G 4V5)

PER CLASS  
**\$5**

**MONDAYS- 6pm - 8PM**

PLEASE E-TRANSFER FEES TO [DTACLASSES8@GMAIL.COM](mailto:DTACLASSES8@GMAIL.COM) WITH YOUR FIRST AND LAST NAME

FURTHER INFORMATION ☎ 905-428-7007 \*

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DATE: May 3rd to May 10th, 2025

**Pricing:** \$1500 (includes bus tour and accommodation). \$1000 deposit required with registration to reserve your spot.

**Itinerary:**

Round trip from Toronto to Tampa, Florida. Cozumel, Mexico, Roatan (Isla Roatan), Bay Island, Honduras, Belize City, Belize, Costa Maya (Mahahual), Mexico

*Tickets are limited, so book now to secure your spot!*

**REGISTER ONLINE:**

[durhamtamils.org](http://durhamtamils.org)



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Contact Number:

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Please place your order a minimum of 5 days before the delivery date.

Eligibility: Vulnerable and Low-Income Seniors: Ages 55 and Up



[dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca](http://dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca)

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

### FAMILY KARAOKE NIGHTS ON FRIDAY

Join us for every Friday night for family fun and music at our Family Karaoke Night!

Bring your vocal talents as we gather for a memorable evening filled with laughter, singing, and bonding. Whether you're a seasoned performer or a first-time singer, there's a song for everyone to enjoy.

We will provide your favorite tunes so get ready to create lasting memories.

Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity to come celebrate your talents.

### DTA SENIOR'S FEB MONTHLY MEETING

DTA Senior's March monthly meeting will be held on Sunday Feb 23, 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](http://durhamtamils.org)

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



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

#### OUR FREE SERVICE

- Meal Delivery
- Transportation :Worship Places,(Temple, Mosque, Church) Malls & Restaurants etc.
- Volunteer Drop off/ pick up: -Medical Appointment, Grocery shopping, Hospital/Doctors Appointments etc..
- Friendly Visits
- Light House Keeping

#### CONTACT US:

Office Hours: Monday through Friday

Contact Number:

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• (647) 286-9549

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:



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### DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION EVOLVING ELDER CARE IN-HOME SUPPORT



Ages 55 and up

Vulnerable and Low-Income seniors

#### SERVING EIGHT MUNICIPALITIES IN DURHAM

PICKERING, AJAX, WHITBY, OSHAWA, CLARINGTON, BROCK, UXBRIDGE, SCUGOG

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







# February is Black History Month



- canada.ca

Each February, people across Canada participate in Black History Month events and celebrations that honour the legacy and contributions of Black people in Canada and their communities.

The 2025 theme for Black History Month is: “Black Legacy and Leadership: Celebrating Canadian History and Uplifting Future Generations.” This theme acknowledges the diversity of Black Canadians, the importance of Black leadership and the legacy being built for future generations. Black communities are diverse at many levels. Those with a long history in this country have established a legacy for the newer communities. The theme underscores that Black Canadians have a rightful place in the nation’s narrative, with over 400 years of historical presence on these Indigenous lands, deserving acknowledgment and celebration.

## About Black History Month

During Black History Month, Canada honour and amplify the voices of Black Canadians while celebrating their many achievements and contributions. The efforts of Black Canadians and their communities throughout history have greatly enriched Canada’s cultural diversity, compassion and prosperity.

## Black history in Canada

Black Canadians and their communities have been a part of shaping Canada’s heritage and identity since the arrival of Mathieu Da Costa, a navigator and interpreter whose presence in Canada dates back to the early 1600s.

The first Black person in Canada, Mathieu Da Costa, arrived on the country’s East Coast in 1605. He’d sailed with Samuel de Champlain, hired as a valued interpreter. But for the many Blacks who arrived after him, the experience was very different.

Black history in North America, unlike “White” history, must take into account the hundreds of thousands of Africans who were brought to this continent against their will. The experience of slavery, in Canada and in the United States, has wreaked havoc for generations. Canada played a key role in the liberation and eventual return of some slaves to Africa, but for many others, their lives had already taken root here.



Mathieu Da Costa  
(Courtesy Dr. Henry Bishop  
Black Cultural Centre for  
Nova Scotia)

The role of Black people and their communities in Canada has largely been ignored as a key part of Canada’s history. There is little mention that some of the Loyalists who came here after the American Revolution and settled in the Maritimes were people of African descent, nor the fact that many soldiers of African descent made many sacrifices in wartime as far back as the War of 1812.

Few people in Canada are aware of the fact that African people were once enslaved in the territory that is now known as Canada, or of how those who fought enslavement helped to lay the foundation of Canada’s diverse and inclusive society.

Black History Month is a time to learn more about these Canadian stories and the many other important contributions that Black Canadians and their communities have made to the history and continued growth of this country.

## Recognizing Black History Month in Canada

In 1978, the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) was established. Its founders, including Dr. Daniel G. Hill and Wilson O. Brooks, presented a petition to the City of Toronto to have February formally proclaimed as Black History Month. In 1979, the



first-ever Canadian proclamation was issued by Toronto.

The first Black History Month in Nova Scotia was observed in 1988 and later renamed African Heritage Month in 1996.

In 1993, the OBHS successfully filed a petition in Ontario to proclaim February as Black History Month. Following that success, Rosemary Sadlier, president of the OBHS, introduced the idea of having Black History Month recognized across Canada to the Honourable Jean Augustine, the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament.

In December 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by Dr. Augustine. The House of Commons carried the motion unanimously.

In February 2008, Senator Donald Oliver, the first Black man appointed to the Senate, introduced the Motion to Recognize Contributions of Black Canadians and February as Black History Month. It received unanimous approval and was adopted on March 4, 2008. The adoption of this motion completed Canada's parliamentary position on Black History Month.

- *canada.ca*

## Is there a global Black History Month?

It turns out, Black History Month is officially celebrated in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands and Germany (sort of). The United States and Canada both celebrate BHM in February. But the UK, Holland, and Ireland have chosen October as their Black History Month



## Statement by the Prime Minister on Black History Month

“Today marks the beginning of Black History Month – an opportunity to honour the culture, resilience, and achievements of Black Canadians.

“In communities across Canada, Black leaders, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and activists have shaped our country's history and continue to inspire its future. From the Underground Railroad, which brought freedom seekers to Canada, to trailblazers like Jean Augustine and Lincoln Alexander, Black Canadians have led the way in the fight for justice, innovation, and progress.

“This year's theme, ‘Black Legacy and Leadership: Celebrating Canadian History and Uplifting Future Generations’, reminds us that the stories of Black Canadians keep being written every day. The advocate pushing for racial equity, the entrepreneur building a thriving business, the artist using their voice to drive change – these contributions continue to shape Canada for the better. “Black Canadians have faced – and continue to face – too many barriers. That is why, last year, the Government of Canada extended its efforts under the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent until 2028 and welcomed the adoption of a second International Decade, which spans from January 2025 to December 2034. This extension allows us to further

invest in Black-led programs, advance racial justice, and create opportunities for Black Canadians.

“To date, we have committed over one billion dollars to Black-focused initiatives, including the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, which has supported over 2,700 projects to grow Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving charities and non-profit organizations. We developed Canada's Black Justice Strategy to address systemic barriers and injustices by ending the overrepresentation of Black communities in the justice system. Through the Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund, we are supporting Black Canadians to develop more culturally focused knowledge, capacity, and programs to improve mental health in their communities. And through the Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund and the Black Entrepreneurship Program, we are helping improve the social and economic outcomes of Black communities and helping Black-owned businesses grow and succeed now and into the future.

“On behalf of the Government of Canada, I encourage everyone to learn more about Black Canadian history and reflect on the challenges and accomplishments of Black Canadians. Let us recommit to building a country where every Canadian can succeed and have their voices heard.”

- *pm.gc.ca*





## SPECIAL FEATURE

# VARAHA (BOAR) 3<sup>RD</sup> OF DASAVARAMS OF VISHNU AND SRI BHU VARAHASWAMY TEMPLE, SRIMUSHNAM, TN., INDIA

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

### INTRODUCTION

**Sri Bhu Varahaswamy Temple**, also known as the **Varaha Narasimha Temple**, is a significant Hindu temple located in **Srimushnam**, Cuddalore Dt., Tamil Nadu. It is dedicated to **Lord Varaha** (Boar), the third of the Ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu, called the Dasavataram.. The temple's name is **Bhu Varaha**, which translates to **Varaha of the Earth**, emphasizing Lord Vishnu's role as Earth's protector in this form.



### HISTORY

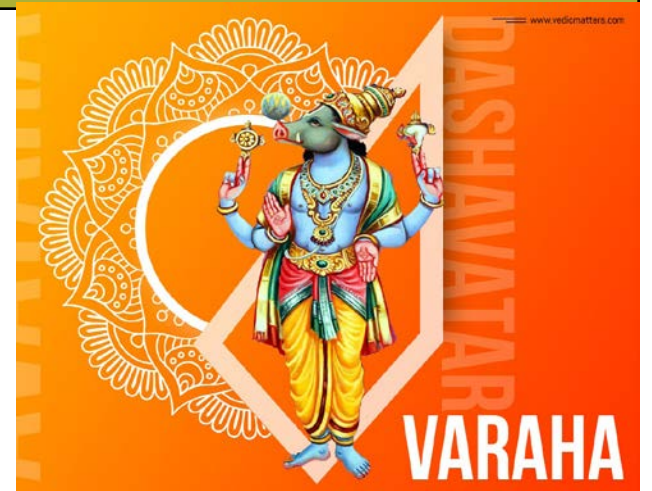
This temple is believed to have been constructed during the Chola Dynasty's reign. Historical records indicate that the **Bhu Varahaswamy Temple** has been a prominent pilgrimage site for centuries, drawing devotees from across the country. Over the time, the temple has undergone multiple renovations and expansions, with contributions from the various ruling dynasties, including the **Cholas**, **Pallavas** and **Vijayanagara Empires**. The Bhu Varahaswamy holds great importance for the local community and is regarded as a symbol of religious and historical heritage. Its ancient origin and connection to Hindu Mythology make it a significant site for those seeking spiritual enlightenment and cultural understanding. The temple's historical value and architectural magnificence continue to attract visitors from various regions, establishing it as a



revered landmark in the area. This temple is considered a scared place where devotees can seek blessings for protection, prosperity and spiritual fulfilment. Its location in Srimushnam, a town steeped in religious lore and ancient traditions add to its spiritual significance and draws pilgrims and tourists seeking solace and divine interventions.

### LEGENDS

As the legend goes, once the **four Kumaras** (sages), the eldest four sons of Lord Brahma went to visit Lord Vishnu in His Celestial Abode, Vaikuntha. Owing to their difficult tapas and righteous living, the four Kumaras looked very young, despite being old in their age. At that time, Lord Vishnu was taking rest and therefore **Jaya** and **Vijaya**, the two gatekeepers of Vaikuntha, denied them entry thinking that they were mere children. Enraged being stopped, the four Kumaras cursed both the gatekeepers that they will lose their divinity and will be born as mere mortals on earth, to be trapped in the cycle of birth and death forever. When Lord Vishnu appeared knowing about the curse, Jaya and Vijaya requested Him to lift the curse of the four sages. Lord Vishnu told them that the curse can not be lifted, but can be modified. Lord Vishnu then offered them, an alternative of being born as demons in their next three lives, only to be killed at the hands of Lord Vishnu's incarnations. Following these three lives as demons and by being killed by Lord Himself, they will be restored to their divinity and position as gatekeepers of Vaikuntha again. Jay and Vijaya decided that it was better to be born as demons and be killed by the Lord Himself, as it would mean that they could get back to Vaikuntha sooner, being born as humans, although higher in status than demons, would mean they wouldn't be able to get back to Lord Vishnu sooner. The first birth of Jaya and Vijaya was in **Satya Yuga Hiranyakasipu** and **Hiranyaksha**, the demon brothers. Hiranyaksha was greatly devoted to Lord Brahma and did severe penance for years to get Lord Brahma to grant him a boon. Lord Brahma was pleased by Hiranyaksha's



severe penance and asked him to ask whatever he wanted. Hiranyaksha asked Lord Brahma, that no man, God, animal, demon or beasts should ever be able to kill him. As soon as he was granted this powerful boon from Lord Brahma, he became reckless and went about torturing Gods and mortals alike, wreaking havoc in the world. He wanted to defeat Gods, and gain Heaven, but Gods were still very powerful, even though they couldn't kill him. Soon Hiranyaksha realized that he needs to disrupt the earth, because it is the devotion of humans that make the Gods Powerful. To permanently defeat the Gods, he used such strong weapons on earth that planet got displaced from its axis and slipped in the abysmal darkness of cosmic



waters. With earth lost in the deep cosmic ocean, gods grew even weaker, while mother earth pleaded with Lord Vishnu to save her. Meanwhile, Hiranyaksha challenged the gods to come and fight him. The havoc that Hiranyaksha caused led the first man **Manu** and his wife **Shatarupa** worried about the current state of things. They prayed to Lord Brahma for His help. Since Lord Brahma Himself had given the boon to Hiranyaksha, he couldn't do much. So, Lord Brahma suggested that they pray to Lord Vishnu and take His help. Lord



## SPECIAL FEATURE



Brahma meditated on Lord Vishnu and a small **boar** came out His nostrils and started growing larger and larger immediately, soon to the size of a mountain. This was **Varaha Avatar** of Lord Vishnu, who promised Lord Brahma and others that he would save the Earth from the cosmic waters and kill Hiranyaksha. The reason behind Lord Vishnu taking the form of a boar was that while Hiranyaksha mentioned all the animals and living beings to be protected



from, he forgot to mention the boar. As Varaha charged to the depths of cosmic ocean to save mother earth, Hiranyaksha challenged various gods to fight him. God of water, Varuna suggested that he himself was too old to fight and therefore instead of him Hiranyaksha should fight Lord Vishnu. Varaha in the meanwhile, lifted the Earth on His tusks and placed the planet in its proper place in the solar system. Soon after saving mother Earth, a fight started between Hiranyaksha and Varaha, and the demon was killed by Lord Varaha.

### SYMBOLISM AND MEANING

The Varaha is represented in the form of a God with human body and the head of a Boar. Often He is shown carrying Earth on His tusk. The Varaha avatar of Lord Vishnu symbolizes sacrifice, as a being that brings in peace amid chaos by ritual sacrifices (of Hiranyaksha).

### SIGNIFICANCE OF BHU VARAHASWAMY TEMPLE IN SRIMUSHNAM

This temple is believed to be one of eight **Swayam Vyakta Kshetra** of Lord Vishnu, where the deity is said to have self-manifested. It is also considered as a sacred place for performing ancestral rituals and seeking blessings for fertility and prosperity. This temple has it is believed to be the place where Lord Varaha rescued the mother earth, **Goddess Bhudevi** from the demon, Hiranyaksha.

### RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

The **Bhu Varaha Swamy Temple** is a hub of religious activity, with daily rituals and ceremonies conducted by a team of dedicated priests following ancient Vedic traditions. The temple follows a strict schedule of



worship, with multiple rituals performed throughout the day to honour Lord Varaha and other deities enshrined within the complex. The day begins with Suprabhata Seva (early morning prayers) followed by Abhishekham (ritual holy bathing) of the main deity, accompanied by the chanting of Vedic Hymns and Mantras. The temple's rituals and ceremonies are conducted with great reverence, reflecting the deep-rooted faith and devotion of its worshippers, The

**Vaikunta Ekadasi**, which marks the divine ascent of Lord Vishnu to His celestial abode. Another important festival is the **Brahmotsavam**, a 10-days extravaganza featuring elaborate rituals, cultural performances and religious discourses. These festivals serve as occasions for spiritual rejuvenation and communal bonding, fostering a sense of unity among devotees. In addition to these major festivals, the temple also observes monthly rituals dedicated to specific deities associated with Lord Vishnu's retinue. These rituals include, Utsavams (celebratory processions), Aaradhanas (offerings) and Parayanas (recitations) that uphold the temple's spiritual vibrancy throughout the year. The temple's festive

atmosphere during these occasions aerates an aura of joy and devotion, drawing people from all walks of life to partake in the **divine celebration**.

### OTHER VARAHA SWAMY TEMPLES & THEIR LOCATIONS



- Sri Varahaswamy Temple, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh,
- Varaha Temple, Khajraho, Madhya Pradesh,
- Varaha Temple, Pushkar, Rajasthan,
- Varahaswamy Temple, Cherai, Kerala,
- Bhoo Varahaswamy Temple, Mysuru, Karnataka,
- Varaha Swamy Temple, Yelandur, Karnataka,
- Yajna Varaha Temple, Jaipur, and
- Lakshmi Varaha Temple, Kendrapara, Odisha



annual festivals and religious observances held at the temple serve as a unifying force for the community, fostering a sense of collective spirituality and cultural pride. The temple also hosts several annual festivals that attract large gatherings of devotees from across the region. One of the most significant festivals celebrated at this temple is the





## SPECIAL FEATURE

# NARASIMHA (HALF MAN & HALF ANIMAL), THE 4<sup>th</sup> OF DASAVATARAMS OF VISHNU AND SNAKE-SHAPED SRI LAKSHMI NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE IN NAMPALLY GUTTA, TELAGANA, INDIA

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

### INTRODUCTION



Though there are lots of temples for Lord Narasimha in India, I chose to write about this temple because of the *Majestic Snake-shaped Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple and because of its unique, one-of-a-kind Structure*. This temple is situated amidst the lush green hills and stays as a hidden gem on a small hillock on the Vemulawada-Karimnagar Highway situated at *Nampally Gutta*. This is a small shrine dedicated to Lord Lakshmi Narasimha. On the way to the Narsimha temple, there is a temple for *Naga Devatha*. This temple structure in Nampally Gutta, was built like a snake's body. Visitors can enter the shrine through the snake's belly, a long winding tunnel. There are statues depicting the story of *Prahalada* and his father *Hiranyakasipu*. At the end of the tunnel, one can see the statue of Lord Narsimha killing the demon Hiranyakasipu. There are also few ancient idols of Naga Devatha. A striking statue at the entrance depicts Lord Narasimha emerging out of a pillar, enhancing the temple's distinctive charm. The main idol is uniquely carved out of the rock, seamlessly blending with the natural landscape around it. The visitors have to walk a few hundred steps that lead to top. The climb is a little steep and may take up to 15 minutes. It is an excellent destination for those seeking both spiritual solace and scenic beauty. On top of the Snake sanctuary, there is a sculpture of Lord Krishna. This would help one remember the story of Lord Krishna, dancing on top of the *evil snake Kaliya*.

### REASON FOR THE NARASIMHA AVATAR

As the legend goes, the demon *King Hiranyakasipu* obtained a very powerful

boon from Lord Brahma. According to the boon, he could not be killed by human or animals. In addition, it also granted him, that he could not be killed in the morning, afternoon or night. Having obtained the boon, he demanded that everybody in his kingdom should worship him and not the Gods. But his pious son, *Prahalada* who was very devoted to Lord Vishnu refused to worship him. So, Hiranyakasipu wanted his son killed. He tried several methods, including asking his sister *Holika* to enter a blazing fire with Prahalada in her lap, as Holika had a boon which made her immune to fire. Story goes that Prahalada was saved by Lord Vishnu Himself because of Prahalada's extreme devotion and the evil minded Holika was burnt to ashes, since her boon was only when she entered the fire alone, all by herself. Being very upset for not being able to kill Prahalada, and demanded Prahalada to show Lord Vishnu for him and Prahalada told him that He is everywhere. So, Hiranyakasipu showed a pillar in his palace and demanded Prahalada to show Lord Vishnu in that pillar. Lord Vishnu appreciating Prahalada's wholehearted devotion, took Narasimha Avatar and ripped the pillar and came out of it and killed Hiranyakasipu. Lord Narsimha has the head of a *Simham* and the body of a man. This way, Lord Vishnu left the boon he gave Hiranyakasipu, as He was neither a man nor an animal but, He was both. Also, He came out of the pillar neither in the morning, afternoon or night, as He had promised Hiranyakasipu and came between afternoon and night. That time is the same as when *Pradosham* worship is done for Lord Siva.

### MYTHICAL CONNECTION

Throughout history, snakes have been influential in various mythologies and religious beliefs. The serpent symbolized rebirth, fertility, wisdom and divine power in numerous cultures worldwide. This symbolism has inspired the construction of this Snake shaped temple, where the architectural form pays homage to the revered creature. Snake shaped temple serves as sacred spaces for devotees to connect with the divine, seeking blessings, protection and enlightenment. India, home to a rich tapestry of ancient traditions, snake worship is deeply ingrained in Hindu mythology.



The country boasts of remarkable snake shaped temples dedicated to serpent deities like Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu and Goddess Manasa. These temples attract thousands of pilgrims seeking blessings and spiritual solace.

### HISTORY

*Nampally Gutta Temple*, nestled in serenity, tells a story of divine presence just outside the bustling city. This peaceful sanctuary, hidden amidst lush greenery, echoes the whispers of devotion. Imagine stepping into the temple's premises, a tranquil escape from the chaos of the world and embracing the sacred solitude it offers. The temple emanates an ancient aura of sanctity. Its architecture serves as a testament to the timeless connection between the earthly and the celestial realms. As pilgrims climb the stone steps, each step resonates with the countless prayers offered, allowing them to embark on a spiritual journey that transcends the boundaries of time.

### ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL

Snake-shaped temples are architectural marvels that showcase the ingenious craftsmanship of ancient builders. These temples are designed as a snake, with sinuous curves, coiled bodies and elaborate details. The layout often mimics the serpent's anatomical features, such as the hooded head or the winding tail, creating a visually stunning



## SPECIAL FEATURE



spectacles. Curiously, the passage to the sanctuary is through the mid-region of the snake. The snake sits in a nestled fashion and worshippers can stroll through the serpentine passage with sculptures of legendary figures on the two sides. The account of Prahalada and his father, the demon Hiranyakasipu is portrayed through the sculpture. At the edge of the passage, the snake temple lies the life-like sculpture of Lord Narasimha, killing the ruler of devils, Hiranyakasipu. Divinities of Naga Devathas are likewise present in the place of worship and close to the entry of the sanctuary, lies an icon of Lord Narasimha. The perspective on the snake sanctuary looks terrific from the hillock of the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple. The peak offers an all-encompassing perspective on the Vemulawada town with the snake sanctuary in the middle,



encompassed by a limitless extraordinary vegetation, the riverbed of the Godavari and the moving slopes. The view is downright entrancing.

## RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

The temple becomes a vibrant hub of religious festivities, particularly during Narasimha Jayanthi and significant Hindu religious occasions. Devotees gather in large numbers to participate in joyous celebrations, pujas and processions.

## NEARBY PLACES TO SEE

1. **Nampally Gutta Sri Hanuman Temple**  
This sacred location devoted to Lord Hanuman, is intertwined with the myths and traditions. The history of this temple connects with the stories of the devotees who, upon discovering an old statue of Lord Hanuman on the hillside, initiated the construction of the temple. Dedicated to Lord Hanuman, this temple emanates an ancient aura of sanctity. Its architecture serves as a testament to the timeless connection between the earthly and the celestial realms. The panoramic views from the temple not only provide a visual delight, but also offers a glimpse into the harmonious co-existence of nature and divinity.
2. **Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple** also known as **Yadagiri Temple**  
This is also known as **Yadagiri Gutta Temple** (also known as **Pancha Narasimha Kshetram** and **Rishi Aradhana Kshetram**). This Hindu temple is situated on a hillock in the small town of Yadagiri Gutta in the Yadagiri Bhuvanagiri Dt. of Telagana. Yadagiri Temple is touted as **Telagana's own Tirupati**. According to Skanda Purana, **Yada**, the son of a sage performed penance here to Lord Narasimha. Being pleased with his penance, Lord Narasimha manifested himself in five forms: **Jwala Narasimha, Gandabhertunda Narasimha, Yogananda Narasimha, Ugra Narasimha** and **Lakshmi Narasimha**. Yada requested Lord Narasimha to remain on the hill forever in these forms. For this reason, the temple has deities of Lord Narsimha in all the five forms enshrined in stone in the main cave. This temple is in a cave about 3.7 m high and 1.9 m long, located in the back of the temple hall, by the rear pillar. There is a stairway down into the chamber and then towards the back. Jwala Narasimha is in the shape of a serpent, while Yogananda Narasimha appears sitting in meditation yoga pose. The silver icon of Lakshmi Narasimha is installed in the main shrine. To the right of the temple's main door is the Hanuman Temple. There is a long horizontal gap in the rock just below Hanuman. This is said to be where Gandaberunda Narasimha is manifested. It is said that any wish of a sincere devotee visiting this temple will be fulfilled. The sanctum sanctorum (garbhagriha) is located in a cave, under a huge slating rock, which covers half the temple.
3. **Nampally Gutta Hills** Situated atop the Nampalli Gutta Hills, the temple provides a serene setting for visitors to admire the breathtaking view of the surrounding landscape. It is a perfect spot to immerse oneself in the beauty of nature.
4. **Bhongir Fort**  
Also known as, Bhuvanagiri Fort, the Bhongir Fort is a remarkable historical structure. Its distinctive egg-shaped de-

sign sets it apart, making it a must-visit for history enthusiasts who wish to explore its fascinating architecture and picturesque surroundings.

5. **Bhuvanagiri Jain Temple**  
Bhuvanagiri, is a historic town that offers a glimpse into region's rich cultural and historical heritage. With attractions like the Bhuvanagiri Fort, the ancient Jain temple, it is a place where one can delve into the past and appreciate its significance.
6. **Kolanpaka Jain Temple**  
This is an ancient temple dedicated to Lord Adinatha. Its intricate carvings and sculptures make it a treasure trove of historical and architectural marvels. A visit to this temple is a journey back in time, immersing yourself in its grandeur of sculpture.

## OTHER MAJOR NARASIMHA TEMPLES IN INDIA

Temples for Lord Narsimha are many all over India and so many, that it is difficult to list in this article. Though Narasimhar temples all over India, large number of them are in the Southern India (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telagana and Karnataka). Of those over 60 of them are in Tamil Nadu. The following are only a select few.

- **Ahobhila Narasimha Swamy Temple, Ahobhilam, Andhra Pradesh**  
It is not a one temple town. This called **Nava Narasimha Kshetra** – There nine temples for Lord Narsimha, here and they are:  
1. **Yoga Narasimha**, 2. **Chakra Vata Narasimha**, 3. **Bhargava Narasimha**, 4. **Karanja Narasimha**, 5. **Ahobhila Narasimha**, 6. **Kroda (varaha) Narasimha**, 7. **Jwala Narasimha**, 8. **Maalola Narasimha** and 9. **Paavana Narasimha**.
  - **Melkote Yoga Narasimha Temple, Melkote, Karnataka**
- 
- **Simhachala Narasimha Temple,**
  - **Shri Lakshmi Narsimha Temple, Maharashtra,**
  - **Bhadrachalam Narasimha Swamy Temple, Bhadrachalam, Telagana,**
  - **Lakshmi Narsimha Temple in Kozha, Kerala,**
  - **Narsinghi Narasimha Temple, Rajasthan,**
  - **Narasimha Swamy Temple, Odisha,**
  - **Narsimha Temple, Bhuvaneshwar**



## Get ready to pedal this winter: Join a ride for International Winter Bike to Work Day

Celebrate International Winter Bike to Work Day on Friday, February 14 by joining a free, guided ride throughout downtown Mississauga.



### International Winter Bike to Work Day

**E**mbrace the chilly weather and stay active this winter. The City is hosting a free ride for International Winter Bike to Work Day on Friday, February 14 at 8 a.m. This new event celebrates cycling as a sustainable, safe and enjoyable mode of transportation during one of the coldest months. It's a great way to move your body, commute sustainably and connect with your community. Everyone is welcome, regardless of biking experience.

International Winter Bike to Work Day is a day to encourage people to ride their bikes to work in the winter, and to share the joy of cycling in cold weather.

#### Event details

##### What:

The City is hosting International Winter Bike to Work Day, a free ride for all ages to encourage cycling in the winter.

This 30-minute, eight-kilometre ride will take you on a journey through cycle tracks and multi-use trails. You'll be travelling along Living Arts Drive, Rathburn Road West and Burnhamthorpe Road West. After the ride, cyclists can warm up and enjoy a complimentary breakfast with hot refreshments.

Dress warmly and come prepared for the weather. You can bring your own bike or reserve one of Lime's winter-equipped e-bikes – these are complimentary with limited availability. Don't forget your helmet. Register for the ride.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/winter-bike-to-work-day-mississauga-tickets-1144349302569?aff=oddtcreator>

##### When:

Friday, February 14 at 8 a.m.

##### Where:

The starting location will be at Mississauga City Hall, north-west entrance, Princess Royal Drive and Living Arts Drive.

Register and learn more about International Winter Bike to Work Day.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/winter-bike-to-work-day-mississauga-tickets-1144349302569?aff=oddtcreator>

Not able to make the ride? You can still cycle during the winter months. Use the City's cycling map to map out a route.

<https://www.mississauga.ca/services-and-programs/transportation-and-streets/cycling/cycling-map/>



## COMMUNITY WATCH



# TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION IN STOUFFVILLE

The Stouffville Tamils' Association and the Stouffville Multicultural Association hosted a grand celebration for Tamil Heritage Month on January 26, 2025, at the Stouffville District Secondary School. The event, supported by the York Region District School Board, showcased the rich heritage and traditions of the Tamil community through cultural performances and speeches by over 150 performers.

The celebration was attended by over 600 people, including dignitaries such as Minister Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, MP Hon. Helena Jaczek, and MPP Hon. Paul Calandra. Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt, and Stouffville Councillors Rick Upton, Sue Sherban, and Maurice Smith were also in attendance. Representatives from the York Region Police, York Region District School Board, Markham-Stouffville Hospital Foundation, Stouffville Fire Department, Stouffville Food Bank,



and Stouffville Chamber of Commerce added to the occasion's prestige.

Sivan Ilangko, President of the Stouffville Tamils Association, addressed the audience, saying, "As we mark this occasion, we reflect on the significant contributions the Tamil community has made to the world over 2,000 years in fields like science, medicine, architecture, and literature." He highlighted the richness of Tamil literature, citing classics like the Thirukural, which has inspired many writers and world leaders,

including Mahatma Gandhi, to adopt the path of non-violence.

The event was further enriched by the presence of special guest James Vasanthan, a renowned Indian Television (Tamil) host, film music composer, filmmaker, and motivational speaker. Vasanthan addressed the audience, sharing his perspective on the importance of speaking in Tamil with children at home in order to preserve the language.

The Tamil Heritage Month celebration in Stouffville was a great success, demonstrating the community's growth and success.

*Photo Courtesy: Iyah4U & Easy24News*









# Vaughan's third annual Tamil Heritage Month event was a huge success!



The City of Vaughan's third annual Tamil Heritage Month and Thai Pongal celebration brought the community together on Jan. 18 to honour the richness of Tamil art, heritage and culture.

"I was pleased to see so many people come out and enjoy the City of Vaughan's third annual Tamil Heritage Month and Thai Pongal event," said Mayor Steven Del Duca.

"It was a memorable evening filled with incredible food and performances that honoured

the traditions and culture of the Tamil people. I want to thank the Vaughan Tamils' Heritage and Cultural Organization for their hard work and dedication to help make this celebration a truly special occasion."

Festivities included greetings from Mayor Del Duca, vibrant cultural performances, and a traditional Tamil dinner.

Canada is proud to be home to one of the largest Tamil populations in the world, and, in January, the City honours

the many contributions that Tamil Canadians have made and continue to make to Vaughan.

#### ABOUT VAUGHAN:

The City of Vaughan is one of Canada's fastest growing cities with a population of more than 344,412. Incorporated in 1991, Vaughan includes the communities of Concord, Kleinburg, Maple, Thornhill and Woodbridge. This culturally diverse municipality is located in the heart of York Region and the Greater Toronto Area.





# COMMUNITY WATCH





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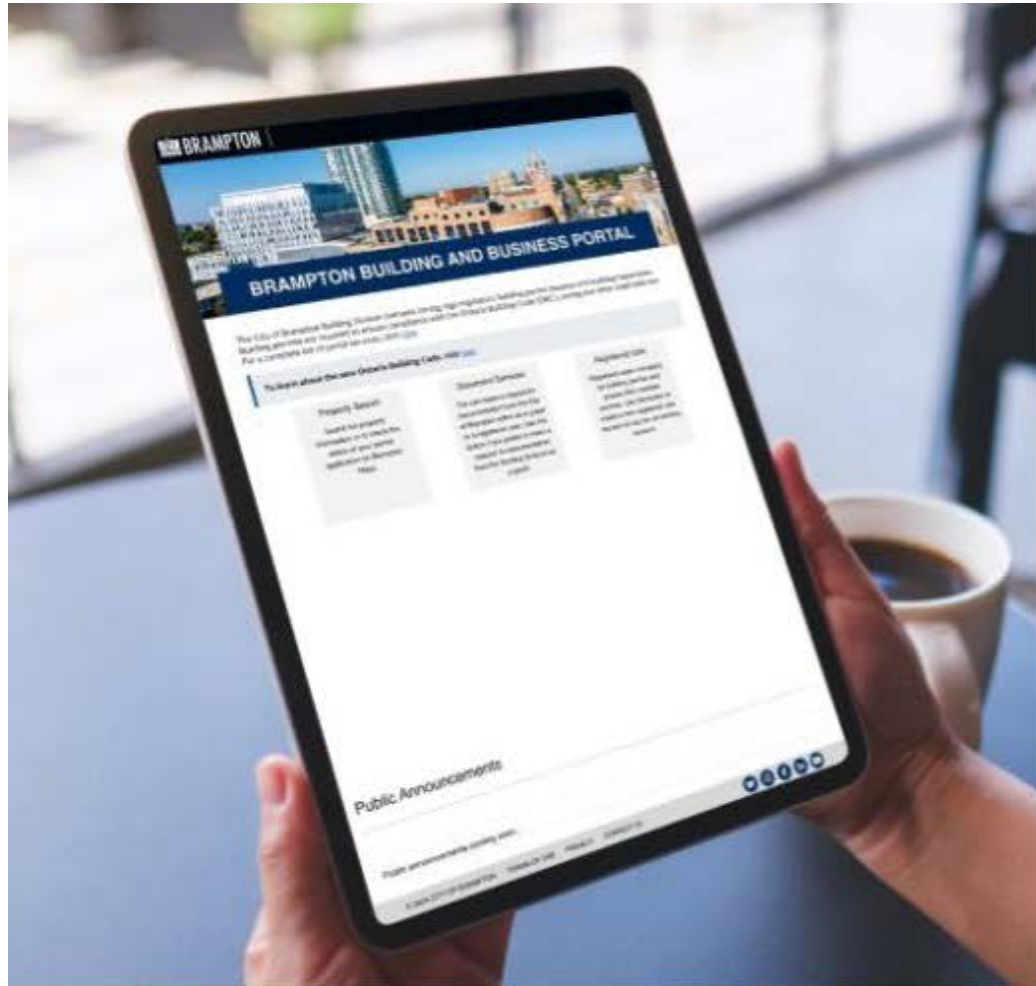
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# CITY OF BRAMPTON WINS GRANICUS DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AWARD FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



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2024 GRANICUS DIGITAL  
GOVERNMENT AWARD**

[brampton.ca/bbportal](http://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:

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, Brampton is home to nearly 700,000 people and more than 100,000 businesses. People are at the heart of everything we do. We are energized by our diverse communities, we attract investment, and we are embarking on a journey to lead technological and environmental innovation. We partner for progress to build a healthy city that is safe, sustainable, and successful. Connect with us on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Learn more at [brampton.ca](http://brampton.ca)



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