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Journal

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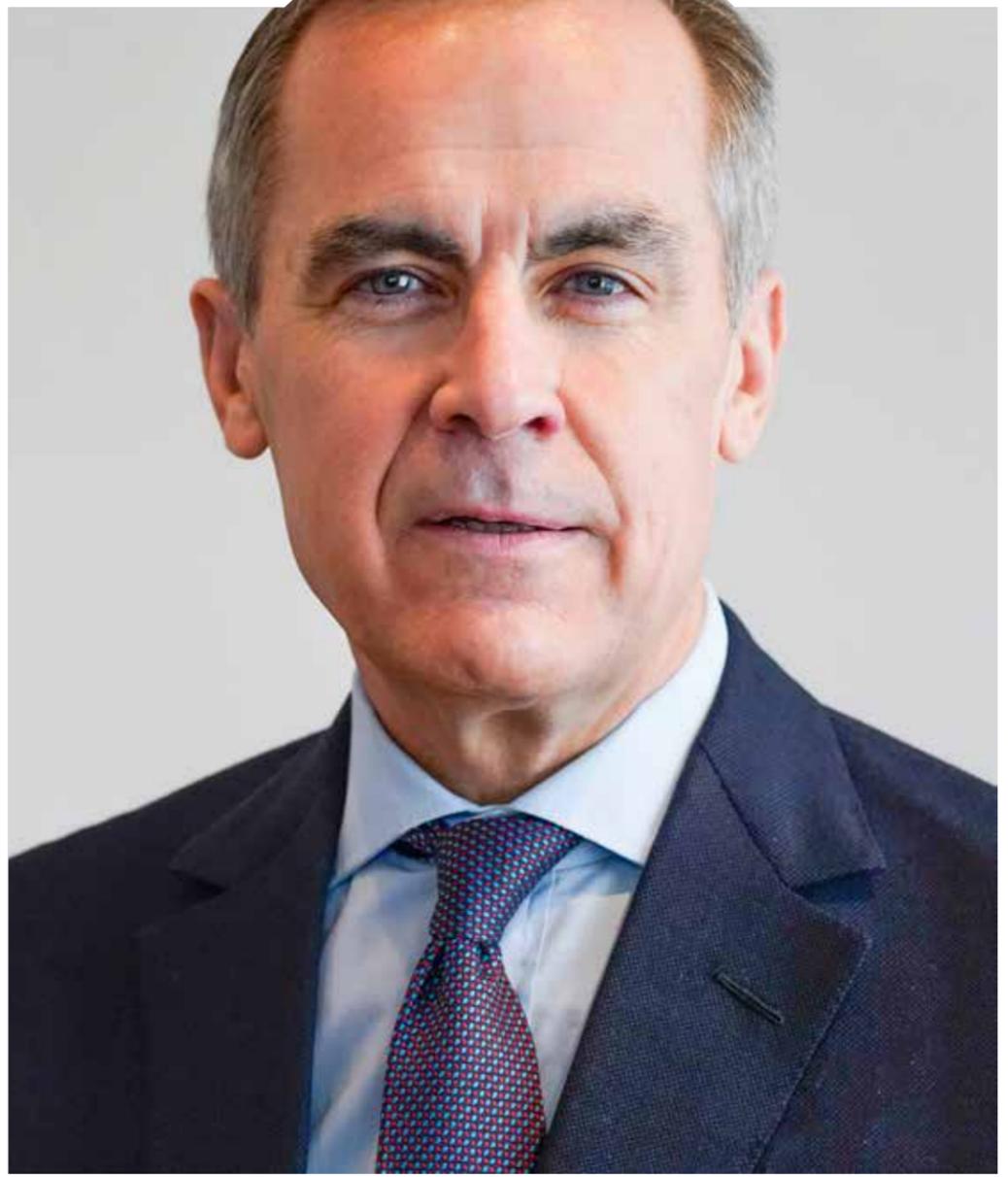
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MARK CARNEY LEADS LIBERAL TO WIN THE FOURTH TERM IN 2025 CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

The Liberal Party won and continued as a minority government. It is the fourth consecutive Liberal government and third consecutive Liberal minority government. The Liberals also won the popular vote for the first time since 2015, with the highest vote share for any party in a federal election since 1984. *Full news in Page 3...*



Prime Minister Mike Carney



Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce President Ari Ariaran delivers speech at the annual Awards Gala on Saturday, April 12, 2025 at the Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites and Conference Centre.

Full News in Page 5 & 6

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MARK CARNEY LEADS LIBERAL TO WIN THE FOURTH TERM IN 2025 CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

The 2025 Canadian federal election was held on April 28, 2025, to elect members of the House of Commons to the 45th Canadian Parliament. Governor General Mary Simon issued the writs of election on March 23, 2025, after Prime Minister Mark Carney advised her to dissolve Parliament. This was the first election to use a new 343-seat electoral map based on the 2021 census. Key issues of the election campaign included the cost of living, housing, crime, and tariffs and threats of annexation from Donald Trump, the president of the United States.

The Liberal Party won and continued as a minority government. It is the fourth consecutive Liberal government and third consecutive Liberal minority government. The Liberals also won the popular vote for the first time since 2015, with the highest vote share for any party in a federal election since 1984.

Both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party improved upon their

vote share and seat count from 2021, while the other parties all lost ground. This was the first election since 2000 in which the Liberals polled over 40 percent, the first since 1988 in which the Conservatives did so, and the first time since 1930 in which both passed that threshold. The election delivered the New Democratic Party (NDP) the worst result in its history, as it received just over six percent of the popular vote and only won seven seats. As a consequence, the NDP lost official party status for the first time since 1993. The concentration of voting in the two major parties was identified by commentators as marking a polarization in Canadian politics and a shift towards a two-party system.

The result was a reversal of polling trends which lasted from mid-2023 to January 2025, which had led to projections of the Conservatives winning in a landslide. Carney's replacement of Justin Trudeau as Leader of the Liberal Party

played a key role in the turnaround. With his extensive experience as a central banker and his perceived competence, Carney was seen as better equipped to handle the trade war launched by the U.S. and other major economic issues. Two sitting party leaders failed to win re-election to their parliamentary seats: Pierre Poilievre of the Conservative Party and Jagmeet Singh of the NDP. Poilievre had held his riding since 2004, and his defeat was regarded as a significant setback for the Conservatives.

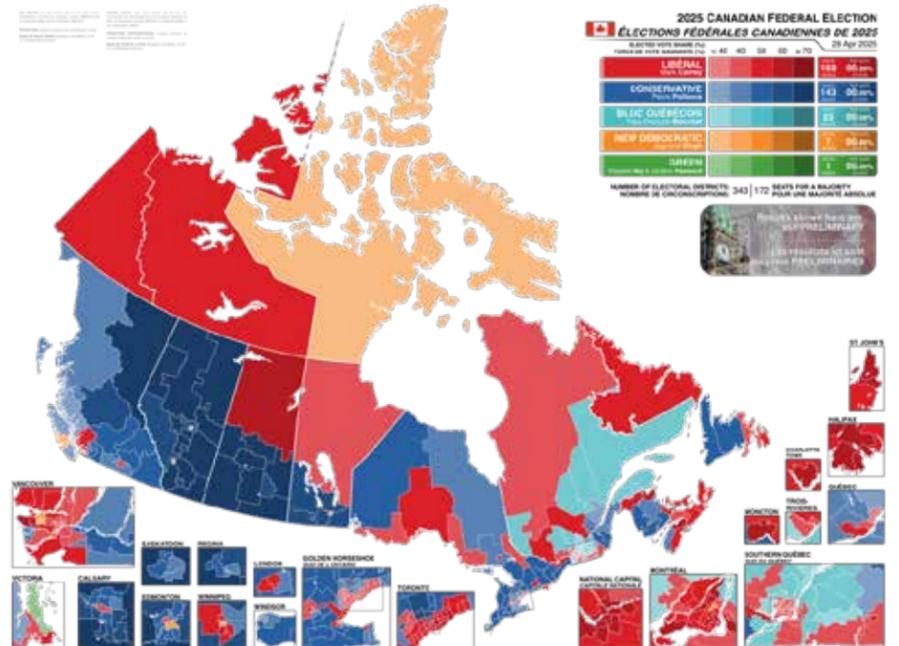


Prime Minister Mark Carney

THE 45TH FEDERAL ELECTION BY THE NUMBERS

Below are key facts from Elections Canada

- ▶ The 45th federal general election took place on Monday, April 28, 2025.
- ▶ To serve Canadians, Elections Canada opened 492 offices, hired some 230,000 people and offered around 7,200 advance and 65,000 election day voting desks in 343 electoral districts.
- ▶ Elections Canada's preliminary estimates indicate that 19,583,016 Canadians cast a ballot. This translates into a voter turnout rate of about 68.65%.
- ▶ Approximately:
 - ▶▶ **11,062,539** voted at their polling station on election day or in their long-term care facility
 - ▶▶ **7,280,975** voted at advance polls between Friday, April 18, and Monday, April 21
 - ▶▶ **928,311** voted by special ballot from within their electoral district
 - ▶▶ **215,057** voted by special ballot from outside their electoral district (includes deployed military personnel, inmates and electors who were in Canada but outside their electoral district)
 - ▶▶ **57,440** electors living outside Canada voted by special ballot
 - ▶▶ In the coming months, Elections Canada will finalize many of these estimated numbers and publish the Official Voting Results, along with other official reports.
 - ▶▶ **16** registered parties were represented and 1,959 candidates were confirmed.



"I want to thank the some 230,000 people who helped deliver the election. Whether electors voted on election day or earlier at advance polls or by special ballot, election workers were there to serve them and to ensure that the integrity and secrecy of the vote was upheld."

- Stéphane Perrault,
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

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PUBLISHER'S DESK

Diving into Reflection during Tamil New Year

By Harrish Thirukumaran



- vivekamschoolcbse.edu.in

Iniya Puthaandu Nalvazhthukkal...!

Happy Tamil New Year to all those readers celebrating as we welcome in a bright, bountiful spring season. Tamil New Year is a thoughtful occasion as it is a time of deep reflection and one of change, and, cleverly, coincides with the changing of the seasons from winter to spring. Accordingly, it symbolizes the beginning of a new cycle marked by growth, prosperity, and hope. It is annually commemorated on April 14.

Furthermore, it is considered an auspicious occasion to embark on new endeavours, set personal goals, and cherish moments with family. During these celebrations, Tamilians offer prayers and seek blessings for a year filled with peace, joy, and abundance.

It holds a unique significance for me, as it also falls near the birthday of the late Neelampikai Ammal Kanapathypillai, my paternal grandmother. She was also affectionately referred to as Ammah based on the motherly presence she had on me and others during her lifetime. It served as an opportunity to reconnect with her and my own Tamil roots, which I feel bears importance for the New Year. I wanted to spell that out further because it ties in with the space for deep reflection within Tamil New Year.

My moment of reconnection has and was accomplished by relearning her character through the words of my Dad, Kanapathipillai Thirukumaran, along with her words about her husband, my grandfather, Sangarapillai Kanapathypillai. He was often referred to as Pappa.

My Dad had once written that their journey, as with their generation of people, is a sacrificial separation from their loved ones as an enhancement of their children's future. Reflecting on my own life up to this point could not be truer. We often witness parents bid farewell to their children for them to depart on their own life journeys, on their missions to become better people, whatever it may be. It may be a personal goal that we pursue, whether it be a new car, house, a job, spending time with family, or better health.

These endeavours are pursued with the subtle guidance and wisdom of our own parents. But at the same time, it also marks an occasion where we try and learn to become our own people with our own identities. While my Dad may have seen this with his parents, I also see this with him and my mom who professed a similar selfless love and care in order for me to become better, to navigate the world

PUBLISHING TEAM

Managing Editor & Publisher :	Logan Velumailum, B. Sc. - editor4mj@gmail.com
Executive Editorial Board :	Harrish Thirukumaran Danesh Thirukumaran Krishni Narine
Graphics & Design :	Suren Rasadurai - suren8@gmail.com , Santosh Kumar - kasantosh@gmail.com
Photo Journalists :	Gnane B. Gnanendran, Rudy Ruthran
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around me successfully. Reconnecting and understanding our own ancestral roots is important during these exercises of deep reflection because it frames our own journey into a larger story of sorts. It gives us a sense of clarity in the direction of our lives, distinguishing between what matter most to us and what not to worry about as we strive to make ourselves better people. In that sense, I would encourage other readers to do the same as they, of course, celebrate Tamil New Year with a generous serving of rice Pongal.

Once again, Iniya Puthaandu Vazhthukkal!

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CANADA NEWS

Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual signature event, Awards Gala 2025 and it was a huge success



We are thrilled to share that the CTCC Awards Gala 2025, held on April 12th at the Hilton Suites and Conference Centre, was a tremendous success!

With over 600 attendees, the evening brought together a remarkable gathering of dignitaries, bankers, political leaders, business owners, professionals, and of course, our valued CTCC members. The atmosphere was electric as we celebrated excellence in entrepreneurship and community service within our vibrant Tamil business community.

We proudly presented six prestigious awards to outstanding individuals who exemplify innovation, dedication, and leadership:

- ✓ **Best Entrepreneur Award – Pooranakumar Thuraisamy of 747 Auto Parts**
- ✓ **Best Women Entrepreneur Award – Vinoka Kannan of Serene Care Staffing Solution**
- ✓ **Best Young Entrepreneur Award – Kajanth Nithiyananthan of Atomic Build Inc.**
- ✓ **Best Marketing Award – Poorany Sornabala of Poorany Marketing Services**
- ✓ **President's Award – Devathas Sanmugalingam of Times Iron Works**
- ✓ **Best Community Services Award – Siripathy Thampiah of Tamil Isai Kalamanam**

Guests enjoyed a delicious meal served by Hilton as we came together to celebrate success, foster connections, and honour our shared vision.

A highlight of the evening was the cheque presentation to the **Tamil Community Centre**. Thanks to the generosity of our members, the CTCC proudly announced a historic donation of One Million and Thirty-Five Thousand Dollar (**\$1,035,000**) to support this important community initiative.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event. Together, we continue to build a stronger, more connected Tamil business community.

See page 6 for more photos.....



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CANADA NEWS



Festival of Colours Night Market brings community together to support much-needed mental health care for children and youth

On Saturday, April 26, nearly 250 community members gathered at the Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites for Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation's Festival of Colours Night Market, raising critical funds to support youth and adolescent mental health.

This 'fun-raiser,' presented by RBC and supported by The Nanji Family Foundation, brought the community's diverse and vibrant cultures together for an unforgettable, fun-filled evening with a purpose.

Health care is everchanging and so too is the community that Oak Valley Health's Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH) serves. In recent years, the demand for mental health services at MSH has increased substantially, especially among the youth population.

"MSH's Outpatient Mental Health Services facilitated more than 7,700 visits for children and adolescents last year," says Suzette Strong, CEO,

when they need us, right in their own backyard."

Funds from the evening will support a new Child and Adolescent Inpatient Mental Health Unit at MSH. This six-bed unit will enable the delivery of specialized treatment and help reduce wait times for children in crisis who need access to round-the-clock, life-saving mental health care.

"One in five children struggle with mental health issues," says Dr. Amir Barsoum, Chief of Psychiatry, Oak Valley Health.

"Our vision is to offer crisis intervention and stabilization to youth through this new unit. If we are able to provide inpatient care with resources right at hand, it will have a positive impact on readmission rates, recovery, and the future of these patients in general."

Kayla Williams, TV personality, kicked off the night as emcee and host. Guests were treated to a vibrant array of food stations reflecting the diversity of the community, along with engaging activities like an AI photo booth, a hip hop vs. Bhangra dance-off, lipstick readings, and more. Live entertainment consisted of performances by Juno Award winning recording artist,

See page 8 for more....



Kayla Williams, TV personality, emcees the night with vibrant energy.

MSH Foundation. "Initiatives like the Festival of Colours Night Market helps ensure MSH can continue expanding its mental health services to care for any child and their family



L – R: Dr. Amir Barsoum, Chief of Psychiatry, Oak Valley Health, Mark Fam, President & CEO, Oak Valley Health, Kevin Hum, Community Manager, RBC and Suzette Strong, CEO, MSH Foundation



L – R: Dr. Amir Barsoum, Chief of Psychiatry, Oak Valley Health, Mark Fam, President and CEO, Oak Valley Health, Shahid Amlani and Azim Nanji, The Nanji Family Foundation with Suzette Strong, CEO, MSH Foundation.

CANADA NEWS



Live entertainment with Sean Jones (right).

Continued from page 7...

Sean Jones, and power vocalist, Cleopatra Williams. Guests danced into the night to the music of five-time winner of Canada's #1 Club DJ Award, DJ Baba Kahn, who has shared the stage with 50 Cent, Sean Paul, Ne-Yo, and T-Pain.

Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation exists to enable the growth of Oak Valley Health's Markham Stouffville Hospital

(MSH) by raising funds and awareness for its ongoing priorities and needs. Donations from the community fund life-saving medical equipment that helps to ensure the delivery of first-class health care at MSH.



L – R: Allan Bell, VP, Community Relations & Corporate Partnerships, MSH Foundation, Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Craig McOuat, Board Chair, MSH Foundation and Suzette Strong, CEO, MSH Foundation.



Bhangra dancers take the floor to battle hip hop dancers.



Team members of The Nanji Family Mental Health Services at Oak Valley Health's Markham Stouffville Hospital.



US RECIPROCAL TARIFFS AND SRI LANKA'S ECONOMY

The recent economic measures introduced by the United States have had a profound impact on global trade, with Sri Lanka being one of the most affected nations. Under President Donald Trump, a series of “reciprocal tariffs” were implemented to address perceived unfair trade practices by several countries, including Sri Lanka. These tariffs, which range from 11% to 50%, are expected to have a lasting effect on Sri Lanka’s economy, particularly its export sectors and stock market. Notably, Sri Lanka is among the top ten countries affected by these tariffs, facing a rate as high as 44%.

Highest Reciprocal Tariffs

Among the nations facing the highest tariffs, Lesotho and

Country	Tariffs Charged to the U.S.A. Including Currency Manipulation and Trade Barriers	U.S.A. Discounted Reciprocal Tariffs
Pakistan	58%	29%
Turkey	10%	10%
Sri Lanka	88%	44%
Colombia	10%	10%

Madagascar stand out with a 50% tariff. Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Laos also face hefty tariffs of 44%. Other countries affected include Vietnam (46%), Cambodia (49%), Syria, and the Falkland Islands (41%). Countries such as China, India, Malaysia, and Thailand face tariffs between 30% and 40%. On the lower end of the spectrum, Cameroon (11%), Mozambique (16%), and Malawi (17%) face comparatively lower tariffs. These tariffs are intended to reduce the U.S. trade imbalance with these countries, potentially affecting their economies, with Sri Lanka being one of the hardest hit.

U.S.-Sri Lanka Trade

In 2023, Sri Lanka had trade surplus with the United States, amounting to approximately \$2.49 billion. U.S. exports to Sri Lanka totaled \$351.1 million, while imports from Sri Lanka reached \$2,842.1 million. For 2024, U.S. exports to Sri Lanka are expected to rise slightly to \$368.2 million, while imports from Sri Lanka are forecast to increase to \$3,015.6 million, resulting in a projected trade deficit of \$2.65 billion. Early estimates for the first two months of 2025 suggest the trade deficit will persist at \$532.3 million.

Ratio calculation

Surplus against the exports as a percentage = (Trade surplus / export revenue) * 100

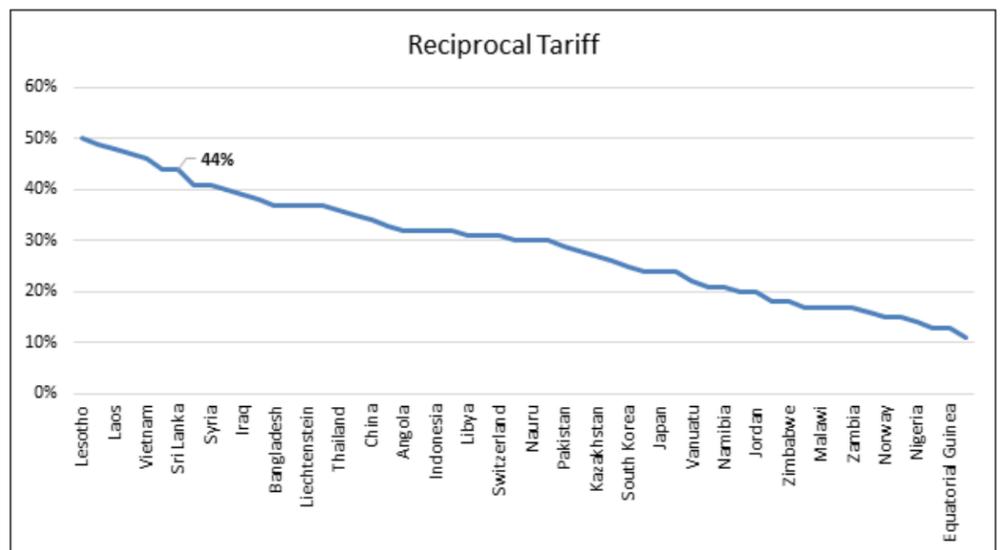
Surplus against the exports as a percentage = (\$ 2.65 / \$ 3,015.6) * 100 = 88%

Key Export Products to the U.S.

- Tea : Sri Lanka’s world-renowned tea could see increased demand.

- Plastics & Rubber
- Jewellery & Precious Metal Articles
- Fish & Shellfish.
- Machinery & Electrical Equipment
- Apparel & Textile Products

However, the U.S. tariffs present a significant challenge to the competitiveness of these products, particularly in the apparel sector, one of Sri Lanka’s largest export industries.



Sri Lanka's Top Imports from the United States

1. Animal Feed
2. Pharmaceutical Products
3. Electrical & Electronic Products
4. Manufactured Products
5. Yarn
6. Plastics and Chemical Products
7. Meat, Fish, and Dairy
8. Telecommunication Equipment
9. Motor Vehicles and Parts
10. Aircraft Parts

Impact of U.S. Tariffs

- Increased Consumer Pressure: U.S. consumers are expected to face higher costs, leading to a 10% decline in overall U.S. apparel consumption.
- Apparel Export Reduction: Relocation of apparel orders could result in a further 15% reduction in U.S. apparel imports over the medium term.
- Trade Volatility: Global growth is expected to be 1% lower, due to rising U.S. inflation and trade volatility.

WORLD NEWS



• **Margin Pressure:** Suppliers in Sri Lanka will face margin pressure (1-5%) as they cannot fully pass on cost increases to U.S. consumers.

• **Small Exporters at Risk:** Small and mid-sized exporters, without scale or regional diversification, are more vulnerable to margin erosion.

• **Garment Industry Risks:** With 15% of Sri Lanka's workforce employed in the garment industry, any slowdown here could result in job losses and hinder economic recovery.

• **Oil Import Savings:** Lower global commodity prices will result in savings of \$250-400 million on Sri Lanka's oil import bill, helping contain balance of payments and exchange rate risks.

• **Interest Rate Decline:** Interest rates are likely to remain on a downward trajectory, supported by lower inflation and faster global monetary easing.

The U.S. tariff system has already begun to impact Sri Lanka's stock market, with the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) experiencing a sharp decline following President Trump's announcement on April 2, 2025. Investors, particularly those with exposure to companies reliant on U.S. exports (such as MGT, TJI, HELA), are concerned about the adverse economic effects.

The broader economic implications of the U.S. tariffs

1. **Export Challenges:** Higher tariffs will make Sri Lankan goods more expensive in the U.S. market, potentially reducing demand.

2. **Employment Risks:** The apparel sector, which employs around 300,000 people in Sri Lanka, is particularly vulnerable. A downturn in exports could lead to significant job losses.

3. **Foreign Exchange:** A reduction in exports will likely affect Sri Lanka's foreign exchange earnings, potentially destabilizing the currency.

4. **Foreign reserves and the exchange rate** will be impacted, leading to higher import prices in the local market, which will contribute to inflation. At the same time, the cost of production in Sri Lanka will rise, causing an increase in the price of export goods in the global market. This, in turn, may reduce the demand for Sri Lankan goods in foreign markets. Sri Lanka needs to adopt several strategic measures.

5. **Diversify Export Markets:** Reduce reliance on the U.S. market by exploring new markets in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

6. **Improve Competitiveness:** Invest in product innovation and quality to remain competitive despite tariff increases.

7. **Engage in Diplomatic Efforts:** Actively engage with U.S. authorities to negotiate more favorable trade terms.

8. **Domestic Support:** Introduce policies to support affected industries, including financial assistance and retraining programs for displaced workers.

Apparel Sector

The apparel sector, which constitutes a significant portion of Sri Lanka's exports to the U.S., is particularly vulnerable to these changes. The 44% reciprocal tariff could make Sri Lankan garments less competitive, especially compared to countries like Bangladesh (37% tariff) and Vietnam (46%

Trade Trends Between Sri Lanka and the USA: 2010 to 2025

Year	Exports from Sri Lanka (US \$ Million)	Imports into Sri Lanka (US \$ Million)	Trade surplus	
			Balance of Trade (US \$ Million)	Ratio calculated Surplus against the exports as a percentage (%)
2010	1,765	178	1,587.00	90%
2011	2,145	307	1,838.00	86%
2012	2,114	224	1,890.00	89%
2013	2,497	353	2,144.00	86%
2014	2,720	493	2,227.00	82%
2015	2,800	471	2,329.00	83%
2016	2,810	540	2,270.00	81%
2017	2,912	811	2,101.00	72%
2018	3,084	645	2,439.00	79%
2019	3,141	549	2,592.00	83%
2020	2,499	495	2,004.00	80%
2021	2,850.50	390.4	2,460.10	86%
2022	3,411.20	336.7	3,074.50	90%
2023	2,842.10	351.1	2,491.00	88%
2024	3,015.60	368.2	2,647.40	88%
2025 (Jan-Feb)	583.5	51.2	532.30	91%

Source: Sri Lanka Customs, U.S. Census Bureau

tariff). This could lead U.S. buyers to seek alternative sources, further challenging the Sri Lankan industry.

The U.S. tariffs present a complex challenge for Sri Lanka's economy, particularly for the apparel sector. However, by adopting a strategic approach—diversifying markets, enhancing product competitiveness, and strengthening trade relations with other regions—Sri Lanka can mitigate the impact and ensure long-term growth. As the global trade landscape continues to evolve, Sri Lanka's ability to adapt and navigate these challenges will be critical in ensuring sustained economic stability.

Writer

Visvalingam Muralithas is a Research Officer in the Research Division of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, specialising in policy analysis and economic research since 2012. Currently pursuing a PhD in Economics at the University of Colombo, his work integrates governance, development, and sustainable growth. He holds a BA in Economics (Hons) from the University of Jaffna (2001) and an MA in Economics from the University of Colombo (2006), complemented by postgraduate diplomas in Education (Open University of Sri Lanka, 2012) and Monitoring & Evaluation (University of Sri Jayewardenepura, 2021). An educator since 2009, Muralithas has taught economics at the University of Colombo and the Institute of Bankers of Sri Lanka (IBSL).

Email: muralithas.v@gmail.com

TP: +94 778135971

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<https://export.business.gov.au/pricing-costs-and-finance/tariffs-taxes-and-duties/us-tariff-changes-support-for-australian-businesses>

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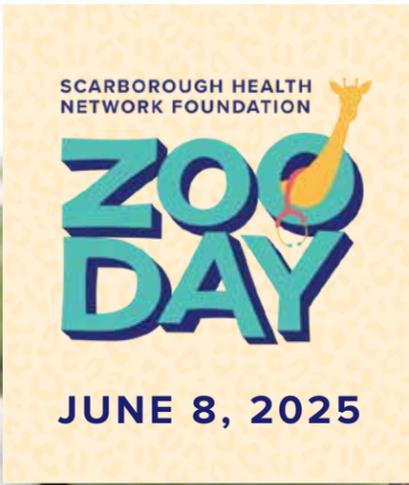
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FROM HOSPITAL TO HABITATS: HOW SHN PHARMACY SUPPORTS PATIENTS & WILDLIFE

Pharmacists are used to providing medications and filling prescriptions for people—but what about for a patient with paws? That was the unexpected challenge faced by Swasti Bhajan Mathur, Director of Pharmacy at Scarborough Health Network (SHN), early in her career as an oncology pharmacist when the Toronto Zoo reached out for help treating an animal with cancer.

“I received an unusual request from the Zoo’s veterinary team,” Swasti recalls. “They needed a specific chemotherapy medication—doxorubicin. It was fascinating to work alongside the vet, calculating the dosage based on the animal’s height, weight, and body surface area, just like we do for human patients.”

This unique partnership is one of many reasons Swasti and her team are passionate about participating in SHN’s largest fundraising event, **SHN ZOO DAY**.

“Our Pharmacy team loves getting involved in SHN events,” says Swasti. “We were thrilled when the Zoo became a partner, and **SHN ZOO DAY** launched.



This is our third year participating as a team, and it’s become a fun tradition for our Pharmacy staff and families.”

On **June 8**, SHN Foundation will host the third annual **ZOO DAY**, aiming to raise \$700,000 for **700,000** annual patient visits across Scarborough hospitals—that’s \$1 for each patient visit.

“When you support **ZOO DAY** and our Pharmacy team, you’re supporting critical work that impacts every patient who walks through our hospital doors,” says Swasti. “It’s not always visible, but it’s vital. Medications are available in the hospital for all patients and provided in a seamless and safe manner.” Swasti is a strong advocate for each patient’s medication needs incorporating systems that promote medication safety.

March is **Pharmacy Appreciation Month**—a time to celebrate the essential role hospital pharmacists and pharmacy technicians play. At SHN, they support inpatients, outpatients, chemotherapy patients, nephrology patients and many others across



Birchmount, Centenary, and General hospitals.

Swasti has been with SHN for 32 years, starting as a pharmacy student and now leading over 150 professionals. Together, they prepare and deliver medications (including sterile medications), support clinical patient rounds, review patients’ appropriate medication therapy, perform Best Possible Medication Histories and medication Reconciliation, assist with medication transitions when patients are discharged, and provide patient education. They are also committed to training the next generation of pharmacy professionals through partnerships with universities and colleges across Ontario.

Each year, the SHN Pharmacy team brings enthusiasm and a deep sense of purpose to **ZOO DAY**. “Many of us bring our kids and spouses—it’s a great way to enjoy a Sunday afternoon together while supporting the hospital. I bring my daughters, Anjuli and Amaya, every year,” says Swasti.

Last year the Pharmacy Team came together to raise \$1,700 for SHN.

“We got creative with our fundraising,” says Swasti. “Everyone wore team T-shirts on Fridays, and for each T-shirt worn, a donation was made. We set up challenges to see who could raise the most. It was fun, and even our kids got involved by doing their own fundraising with their friends and neighbours.” This year they’re aiming for \$2,000.

Scarborough’s hospitals have been left behind for decades, but with your support, we can change that. By joining **ZOO DAY**, you are supporting critical healthcare projects like expanding cardiac services and consolidating inpatient mental health care for better accessibility.

Join Swasti, the SHN Pharmacy team, and thousands of supporters at **SHN ZOO DAY** to help give Scarborough the equitable healthcare it deserves! Whether you’re an animal lover, a healthcare champion, or just looking for a fun-filled day with family and friends, this is your chance to make an impact. Learn more at shnzooday.ca





Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation draws large crowd for Healthy. Together. speaker event with Oak Valley Health's leading cardiac experts



L-R – Pauline Chan, video journalist, CTV News Toronto with Oak Valley Health experts Dr. Shruti Tandon, Cardiologist and Andy Zhou — take the stage to discuss the hospital's leading-edge interventions, specialized clinics and the latest preventive cardiac care information.

Community members attended Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH) Foundation's Healthy. Together. Speaker Series event — Matters of the Heart: A Pulse on Cardiac Care — at The Bridge, a Community Church in Markham. The event drew a record number of guests, hosting more than 250 attendees.

The event was moderated by CTV News' video journalist, Pauline Chan, who specializes in health-related topics, who brought a unique and relevant insight to the evening. Oak Valley Health experts, Dr. Shruti Tandon, Cardiologist, and Andy Zhou, Nurse Practitioner, discussed the hospital's holistic and patient-centred care model, and the initiatives to grow the Cardiology program and services. Attendees also learned about the hospital's leading-edge interventions, specialized clinics and the latest preventive cardiac care information.

"Many of the inpatients I care for have come in through the Emergency Department, either suffering from a heart attack or as a result of congestive heart failure. Being a Nurse Practitioner allows me to work autonomously in many aspects, while still being part of a team and providing comprehensive care to patients," says Mr. Zhou.

The volume of cardiac patients cared for at MSH is steadily on the rise, and projections indicate that the hospital could serve a population close to 500,000 by 2030. MSH's plans to advance patient-centred cardiac services reflect the needs of our growing community. Oak Valley Health is currently working towards a Level 4 Cardiac Program status or higher, starting with a collaboration with Unity Health Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital to enhance overall access and open new pathways to timely complex cardiac care. Additionally, there are plans to enhance MSH's Level 2 Coronary Care Unit. As the government can't fund all the hospital's priority needs, support from the community is critical. Without generous donor support, upgrades like this would not be possible.



L-R – Dr. Shruti Tandon, Cardiologist, Oak Valley Health, Pauline Chan, Video journalist, CTV News Toronto, Suzette Strong, CEO, Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation, and Andy Zhou, Nurse Practitioner, Oak

"There have been developments in the management of heart disease where certain valve problems can be managed less invasively, whereas in the past they required a major operation," says Dr. Tandon. "Our TEE/Echo program has been supported by MSH Foundation and its generous donors. We have the equipment and the resources that we do thanks to the investment of our community."

About Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation

Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation exists to enable the growth of Oak Valley Health's Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH) by raising funds and awareness for its ongoing priorities and needs. Donations from the community fund life-saving medical equipment that helps to ensure the delivery of first-



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Global Aviation and Air Travel, Will it Be in Danger Due Dearth of Air Traffic Controllers and Federal Spending Cuts in the USA?

By: Kane Siva

I still remember reading soon after I joined Air Ceylon in 1972, in an Encyclopedia, that the Age of Aviation started on November 21, 1783. Montgolfier brothers, were considered as the Pioneers of Aviation and Balloonists. They were from the commune Annonay en Ardèche, France. Michel and Jacques Montgolfier invented Montgolfiere-style hot air balloon, which launched the first confirmed piloted ascent of an untethered flight by Humans. Aviation blossomed into great stride on December 17, 1903 with the first controlled,

powered flight of a heavier-than-air machine by Orville and Wilbur Wright. Year 1914 marked the first scheduled passenger service flight when St. Petersburg Tampa Airboat Line began operating. The flight was piloted by Tony Janus. Commercial passenger flights have increased enormously for the last 111 years with Super Sonic Travel etc. Along the way we had many accidents and incidents but we still progressed, progressing after learning what, how and where we went wrong? We



never rested on our laurels. But kept going by investigating, researching and analysing all the minute details to find out the cause and the causes for all these incidents and accidents. The investigating agencies like NTSB, always do a painstaking job to assess, evaluate the cause and make strong recommendations to prevent further lapses.

But what happens when the governments of the countries that participate in global aviation decide not to be proactive, by not providing one of the basic safety tools - The Air Traffic Control Services to its fullest potential, so as to enhance the safety of the passengers and the machines they fly in? This is a sad reality we are facing all over the Globe. Most of the accidents that have

occurred from the beginning of the year and even at other times point a finger towards Air Traffic Control Services too. ATC, is an inalienable component of aviation and air travel anywhere in the globe and you can call them the "Policeman" of the Blue Skies for aviators. They keep them moving and at the same time keep them separated too at different flight levels. It is one of the most stressful, high stakes jobs in the world performed under high stress and pressure says former US navy pilot, Jim Kidrick. When I am penning this, flood of memories plays like a video for me, as to how our air traffic controllers at the Katunayake Airport control tower in 1972 and after, performed exceptionally well with the limited resources we had then. The FAA Academy in Oklahoma City conduct courses for nearly 1500 students every year for 16 weeks. On-the-job-training time for the successful candidates takes 36 to 48 months. This training enables them to work independently in a complex facility, according to Stephen Abraham, former control tower supervisor at JFK Airport. Once they are on the job there is no room for mistakes or error and it is a matter of life and death. According to statistics, the FAA needs more than 14000 ATC staff to manage the flight information region of the US air space and the air routes. Statistics show there are 45000 flights in the US and 100,000 Globally Takeoff and Land in a day. The US air space covers 29.4 million square miles and of the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of America. (Formerly Gulf of Mexico). It is a vast area to cover and monitor. Normally ATC staff are expected to do an 8-hour shift duty but this is not the case at all. In most of the centers they work well beyond the legal limit and are stressed out which puts aviation safety under radar. The FAA is fully aware of the problems facing the air traffic control services but didn't do much or unable to do it. The National Air Traffic Controller's Association President really did vent his feelings regarding air traffic control staff shortages in an appearance on CNN. National Air Traffic Controllers Association



Inside Sydney's Air Traffic Control Tower...

President, Nick Daniels said there are only 10,800 licensed controllers in the whole country and there is a severe shortage of air traffic controllers. Nick contends, roughly around 3600 extra controllers are required to provide unblemished ATC services for the FAA in US. The volume of air traffic has increased in leaps and bounds but the air traffic controller's strength is nonproportional. Daniels emphasizes more funding for air traffic control services, salary increases and stress-free working by having additional staff. The recent mid-air collision at Reagan International airport involving a Black Hawk Helicopter and an American Airlines aircraft where 67 people perished, clearly points a finger to the shortage of air traffic controllers. The air traffic controller who was on duty that day was working beyond his duty hours and was stressed out. This may be or was a contributing factor for the unfortunate crash and also not properly understanding the instructions from the Tower. The most heinous crime was allowing the Military Aircraft to be on a training mission in one of the Nation's busiest airports. I am wondering what a shame or coincidence this



accident happened at the Reagan International, that was named after former President Ronald Reagan, who in August 1981, fired 11,345 striking Air traffic controllers when they demanded better pay and working conditions. Is it ominous that things keep happening and developing at Reagan international or a coincidence that it keeps happening at Reagan International? Leave it to the readers to decide.

The 29th January 2025, evening crash at Ronald Reagan international airport could have been averted if there was more than one air traffic controller on duty to handle the air traffic. This particular staff might have worked well beyond his legally allotted hours of duty. It is horrifying to see that this kind of incident could have happened in the Power House of Global Aviation, USA. A country that promulgates aviation safety laws and set Golden Standards, has allowed itself to dip into abysmal standards. There are various kinds of information, assumptions, and plausible theories as to the cause, but one factor that speaks volume for this crash is the shortage of air traffic controllers. Also misunderstanding the instruction from the air traffic controller. There is always static interference from other electronic devices. The US Federal Agency, FAA, the Aviation authorities across the Atlantic and the Globe have to provide lots of answers. They never implemented stricter work rules for air traffic control services and never monitored the welfare of its staff. It is absolutely insane to blame the controller who was on duty that day at the Regan international.

I wonder why the FAA has not adhered to the basic principle of aviation safety across the US air space? They were aware of the shortage of air traffic controllers for a long time but were slow in acting to provide more staff at these facilities. I think this air traffic controller shortage exists in almost all the airports across the USA. Soon after this incident the new Transport Secretary Sean Duffy vowed to provide more funding for aviation safety and for air traffic control services.

But on the other hand, the newly created DOGE headed by Elon Musk in the USA is requesting FAA and ATC staff who are on probation or training period to submit their resignation. This has caused a lot of panic among the federal workforce in the aviation sector. A few weeks back DOGE terminated 750 staff of the National Weather Service staff who provide valuable weather information to the pilots and decided to reduce the workforce at National Transportation Safety Board. The weather service professionals are

an integral part for aviators. The administration should understand that for these kinds of Jobs, the experience of the staff is really vital, which cannot be purchased in a mall or Supermarket over the counter in a hurry. Having only a super communication system (Starlink) is not the panacea for the cancer facing the air traffic controllers and the FAA. The experience and the expertise, the staff brings after a particular time to the system, is invaluable. AI and SpaceX-Starlink, may increase the efficiency of the system. Relying on technological advancements is a great way to evolve and move forward. But we



should not play down the role of humans in certain sensitive, life and death situations. There is an adage "To err is human" but on the contrary nothing is said about tools and aids created by humans, except a word normally proclaimed when there is a disaster is "Technical Glitch". If you analyse the Boeing 737- Max crashes, when the MCAS-Stabilizing System did not function properly and became uncontrollable which caused massive loss of lives. Also, recent TCAS alerts at Ronald Regan international proves to be a false warning. Humans and Machines are both Fallible. This also could contribute to my belief that solely software tools are not the answer to solve the problems facing ATC. My take is, instead of solely depending on machines, please invest in Human Resilience, Intelligence and Endeavors to ensure the best air safety.

We should never forsake the value of ATC ers who are the backbone and pillars of air safety. Aviation industry is a money spinner for the economy of any country "IF Managed Properly" without squandering. Aviation is a part of any country's economic infrastructure as it moves millions of people and tons of cargo 24 hours with greater precision and efficiency. The US Government's Arm, DOGE by firing Federal

Workers irrationally in the Aviation industry creates a dangerous vacuum for air safety. This act will demoralize, deplete the efficiency and the efficacy of the FAA, ATC, National Weather Services, NTSB and all other related services that provide yeoman services for the safety of air travel.

The forgone statements justify the value, importance and the urgency to staff and revamp the Air Traffic Control Services Globally to ensure safe, sound, and risk-free air travel to millions of passengers.

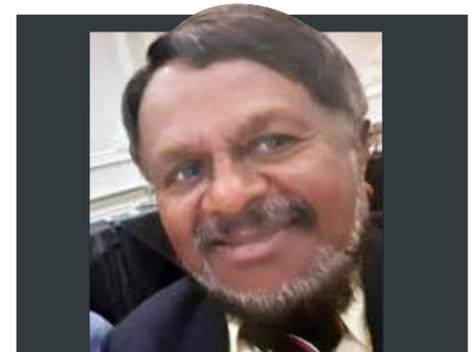
Want to rest my persuasion and arguments with the following.

We are really in uncharted waters

with a lot of issues with the present US Administration, and Aviation Safety also has become a Pawn in Their Hands.

"I strongly feel the Mission of Aviation and its Safety should be accessible to people who patronise the Blue skies without any glitches as much as possible. I still consider, as many aviation pundits say, the safest, most efficient way of transportation of people and goods is Air Transport".

So, Help US God to Achieve This to Its Fullest Potential. A Great Thank You, To all The Air Traffic Controllers, Regulators All Over the World For, Safer Blue Skies.



K.N. Sivagnanasunderam (Blue)
Former Flight Operations
Officer, Air Ceylon Ltd.
Kanesiva6@gmail.com



SPECIAL FEATURE

Words of Peace

Peace Education and Knowledge (PEAK) is a complimentary educational course from Prem Rawat, created to support you in exploring your inner resources. It is a course of self-discovery that puts you in touch with your personal strengths and the profound peace that exists within your heart.



Course Objectives

Connect to your underlying strengths and inner resources
Tap into a deepened feeling of gratitude

Enjoy a journey in understanding that lasts a lifetime

Have the opportunity to learn Prem Rawat's daily practice of Self-Knowledge

Know the part of you that is unchanging and the peace that it brings

PEAK Course Outline

There are three facets of learning in the PEAK format:

I. Watch these topic based chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Who Are You?
3. Clarity and Beliefs
4. Choice
5. Understanding
6. Gratitude
7. Peace
8. Hope
9. Self-Knowledge

II. Capture your learning:

Approximately halfway into each chapter, you will be presented a question and prompted to capture your learning. This journal is just for you and will not be viewed by anyone else.

III. Answer the reflection questions:

At the end of each chapter, you will be asked to answer a reflection question that summarizes your understanding before moving on to the next chapter.

At the end of Chapter 9, a facilitator trained by Prem will review all of your answers. These are necessary to complete the course.

PEAK Course Format & Requirements



Format

- Online course
- Self-paced



Time

- Core content: 40 to 45 minutes per chapter
- Complete journal & reflection questions: 15 minutes per chapter
 - Suggested pace: 1 or 2 chapters per week
 - Total time: Approximately 9 hours



Resources Required

- Internet connection • Desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile device
- Quiet environment for watching video content.

<https://www.intelligentexistence.com/peak-registration/>

What People Say About Peace Education...

- "There are no words to express such powerfully real feelings."
— Participant, England "Thank you for making the PEAK series. It has been life changing." — Participant, USA
- "Thank you for PEAK! It's inspiring and helpful, an incredible tool for everybody interested in personal peace."
— Participant, Denmark
- "I feel fortunate to have gone through the PEAK program. The timeless message, brilliant design, the love and care that went into this production deeply touched my heart."
— Participant, USA
- "Every session is a reminder of something universally important. It expresses itself as a subtle feeling, often for several days afterwards."
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— Participant, Sweden
- "There are no words to express such powerfully real feelings."
— Participant, England



Proverbs



By: J A Rajah

1. பேராசை பெரும் தரித்திரம்.
Excessive desire entails excessive loss.
2. குறைகுடம் தளும்பும் நிறைகுடம் தளும்பாது.
Empty vessels make the greatest sound.
3. அலைகடலுக்கு அணை போடலாமா?
Against God's wrath, no castle is thunder proof.
4. காற்றுள்ளபோதே தூற்றிக்கொள்.
Make hay while the sun shines.
5. சுகமும் துக்கமும் சூழலும் சாரம்.
Sadness and gladness succeed each other.
6. ஆத்திரக்காரனுக்கு புத்தி மட்டு.
Haste makes waste.
7. அழுத பிள்ளை பால் குடிக்கும்.
Ask and it shall be given
8. அழுதமுதும் பிள்ளையை அவளே பெறவேண்டும்.
Every bird should hatch its own eggs.
9. அளவுக்கு மிஞ்சினால் அமிர்தமும் நஞ்சு.
Too much of anything is good for nothing.

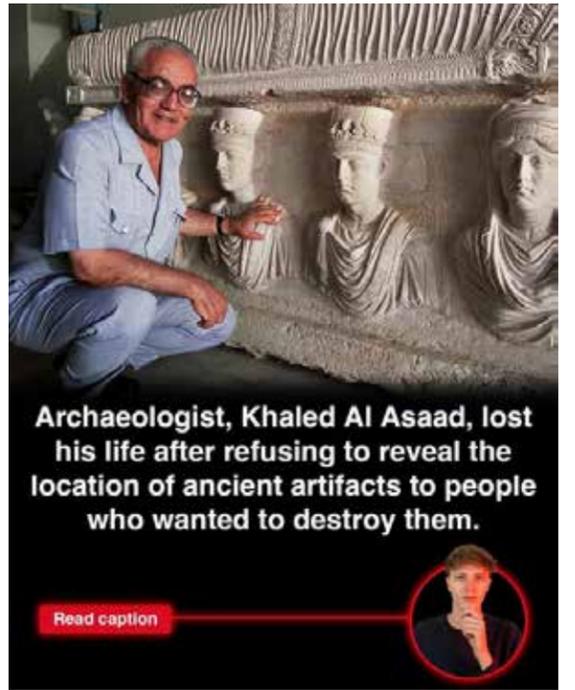


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Today, I want to take a moment to honour the incredible bravery of archaeologist Khaled Al Asaad. He dedicated over 50 years of his life to preserving the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria—a priceless piece of our shared human history. In 2015, at the age of 82, his life was sadly taken after refusing to betray the location of hidden antiquities that he had helped protect. Khaled Al Asaad chose to stand by history, culture, and truth in the face of ignorance. His courage cost him his life, but his legacy endures in every artifact he protected and in the hearts of those who believe in the value of our past. He was not just an archaeologist—he was a guardian of history. Rest in power.



It's a very common thing for people to dump elderly dogs. Used them all their lives as breeding machines or guard dogs with minimal care - then dump them when they're too old to be either. These are the same people warning me of karma because I go around sponsoring spaying programs. Why are we like this?

In 2022, Miss Thailand Anna Sueangam-iam stunned at Miss Universe in a gown of soda can pull-tabs in honor of her garbage-collector parents. Growing up in a Bangkok slum, Anna was bullied as "Miss Garbage" but proved trash can shine, showcasing beauty in the "worthless." *WeirdWorld*

@weirdworldinsta

My husband asked me why I speak so softly in the house. I said I was afraid Mark Zuckerberg was listening. He laughed. I laughed. Alexa laughed. Siri laughed. The Tesla laughed. 🤪📱🚗👁️

In 1921, early suffragettes often donned a bathing suit and ate pizza in large groups to annoy men.

You can't grow with people who don't love how growth looks on you. *Unknown | Soul in Ink*



ARE WE BECOMING A HANDOUT SOCIETY?

By Ariaratnam Gobikrishna

It was a sultry morning—another day in Jaffna spent chasing the fragments of childhood memory. I found myself at the Malayan Café, one of Jaffna's old vegetarian establishments, hoping to rekindle the familiar taste of its timeless dishes. Yet, there was a delay in placing my order—not due to any disorganization, but because the server was carefully processing every Tamil word I spoke. I realized, with a gentle jolt, that Tamil wasn't his first language. A short exchange revealed he was a Jaffna university student from the South—Sinhalese by birth—working to support himself through school.

I expressed my admiration during our brief conversation. There was something poignant in his quiet determination and respectful demeanor. It reminded me of another recent encounter at the Heritage Hotel, where the receptionist gently prompted me to speak in English. Even the room service staff, with similar courtesy, apologized for not being fluent in Tamil. It was humbling—a subtle reminder that in this once exclusively Tamil enclave, new winds were blowing.

That same afternoon, I visited a nearby village to assist a young family with a child. What followed was a series of dead ends—disheartening ones. The young father, a high school dropout with no assets or familial support, rejected every suggestion I offered. Jobs were dismissed as beneath him, relocation was unthinkable—he spoke of cultural roots and the comforts of home, though his circumstances betrayed none. What troubled me more was the caste-laden language he used to demean hardworking people, making me increasingly uncomfortable. It was a conversation that revealed how deep the rot still runs.

As I sat reflecting, a message arrived on my phone—the same young man was prodding me about a purchase of land nearby to build a house. That brought me to a disturbing pattern I've observed: the new wave of land speculation in Jaffna, led by the diaspora.

Two kinds of returnees have emerged in their twilight years—religious zealots and flamboyant showmen. The former are locked in a quiet competition to outdo each other in building religious monuments, with the Hindu contingent leading the race in grandeur and scale. The latter are snapping up land near Jaffna town and the Nallur temple, constructing lavish homes and parading them on YouTube like trophies. This frenzied demand has driven prices



through the roof, sparking criminal land grabs and ugly feuds within families—sometimes even leading to the dispossession of the elderly from their ancestral homes.

Today, in Jaffna, it's hard to carry a conversation for more than a minute without hearing the word “Kodi” (millions)—referring not to dreams or ambitions, but to land values, uttered amid crumbling structures and a backdrop of decay. The contradiction is stark.

It reminded me of a recent conversation in Malaysia with a family whose grandparents had migrated from Jaffna. On a fact-finding visit, they had returned to the old homeland, only to be met with boastful relatives prattling on about property values. One of them summed it up with a bemused chuckle: “Why are they living like this, la?”

My encounter with the receptionist at Jetwing Jaffna, conducted entirely in Tamil, was frustrating from the very beginning. I was asked to prove that my booking through Bookings.com had been paid for—something I had already confirmed through the app. In the end, I had to pay the full amount upfront just so they could “check with their accounts department.” The resolution took over 15 days, after countless back-and-forth emails.

This wasn't just an isolated incident. I've noticed a pattern whenever I try to raise a concern or offer a constructive suggestion in Jaffna—it's met with resistance, sometimes bordering on defiance. The common refrain is: “We need funds because of the civil war.” But

along with that comes a rejection of any advice, expertise, or input—almost as if acknowledging outside perspectives is a threat to their self-image. There's a deep-seated belief that, despite everything that's happened, they lack nothing—except money. And once you show them the money, everything else supposedly takes care of itself. It's a transactional mindset that misses the bigger picture. Without accountability, without a willingness to learn or adapt, no amount of money can build what was lost—nor can it sustain what remains.

It's hard not to feel disheartened by the transactionalism that has taken root—where money is welcomed, but questions are not; where development is measured by the square footage of a house or the height of a temple kopuram, not by the dignity of everyday life or the health of civic discourse.

For a region that suffered deeply from a war rooted in exclusion and inequality, one would expect more humility, more openness to ideas, and a greater sense of collective purpose. Instead, there is often a brittle pride, cloaked in postwar victimhood, that refuses to confront its own shortcomings.

Jaffna deserves more than handouts—it deserves honesty, courage, and a willingness to grow. But that growth will not come from overseas bank transfers alone. It must come from within: through hard questions, uncomfortable conversations, and a letting go of the very hierarchies and habits that once tore it apart.

Until then, we may continue building temples and mansions—but not a future.



The time of his departure

Original by Sushi Krishna - Tamil version by Thuraiyuraan.



Pathmini got up on hearing the coughing sound. That was Baskar from the next apartment. She looked at the time and it was 4:15 a.m. Coughing is getting worse, family doctors medication is not working, must take him to the hospital to do all the tests, while thinking like this she quickly brushed her teeth and washed her face and checked the time again and it was not yet 5:00. His cough continued, the dining area will open at 5:00 a.m. and coffee will be available only after that. Coffee may soothe his throat and help to stop the cough. She called the night duty nurse and told her the situation. She agreed to show up soon. Pathmini prepared hot water in the kettle, poured it into the flask and took a piece of palmyra candy in a small container, then opened the door gently and waited for the arrival of the nurse and went into Baskar's room, which was open.

Baskar was still coughing. Nurse gave him an injection.

"It might take a while for him to get over the cough, he may be able to sleep for about 3 hours," told the nurse and left the room.

Pathmini placed the hot water and candy on the side table. She thought it is better to stay there till he starts to sleep and sat on a sofa by the side and took a newspaper to read. But was not in the mood to do so, hence looked up at the wall and saw an enlarged photo of Meena. If she were to be present Baskar would not have suffered like this, she thought. She was reminded of their life together which ran like a movie in her mind.

Baskar and Pathmini's husband Ragu were from the same Village and attended the same school, until they went to separate towns for college education. Since Baskar was from a well to do family, he went to Chennai for

high education and Ragu studied at Madurai. He was doing very well in his Commerce degree course and was also preparing for an accountancy exam while at college and finished his accountancy course in 2 years after completing his degree. He joined a big company in Chennai as an accountant.

Baskar joined as a supervisor of the factory where Ragu was the accountant. After working for two years Ragu's parents arranged a marriage for him to Pathmini in Chennai. Baskar went with him to meet his future wife. Ragu was feeling shy and was not speaking too much to Pathmini on the day, but Baskar was very vocal and was entertaining all of them on that day. Afterwards, with the agreement of Ragu, his marriage to Pathmini was celebrated well.

Pathmini was able to understand Ragu's quality and nature and learnt to adjust to

Short Story

SPECIAL FEATURE



him. Ragu was a good husband but never showed his love to her in words and actions, but went on attending to his work and routine.

Baskar also got married after 6 months to Meena who was of good family background and was beautiful. Their wedding was celebrated on a grand scale. After a wonderful honeymoon, Baskar was assigned an apartment next to Ragu's by their company. Both friends were overjoyed by this.

Pathmini's family led a very normal life. Her family and neighbors talked highly about her beauty and the efficient way she conducted the family matters. But Ragu never appreciated or praised her about her abilities. When Ragu's mother visited them for 2-3 days she praised her for her palatable cooking.

One day she asked her son "why don't you praise her for her excellent cooking?"

He replied "when I ate more than what I normally do, that indicates that I like that and need no words to express."

Even though their family went on well without any problem. Pathmini expected her husband to be loving and praising her for her good deeds and was disappointed like any other housewife. Her feelings were hurt, when Baskar was treating his wife as a treasure he received and was always praising and showing his love and affection in front of others. Pathmini was much better in beauty and smartness than Meena but Baskar treated her as an angel from heaven. He prepared coffee for her, before she got up and both of them enjoyed sipping coffee while sitting on the balcony. Pathmini has seen this several times from her window.

She compared this to what is happening in her home. She used to get up early and have coffee since Ragu used to get up late and then went for a walk. Sometimes Baskar also went for a walk in the morning. She used to greet him with a good morning and walked by and when Baskar tried to speak to her she avoided it, since she did not like to speak while walking.

Furthermore, she was worried about going home before Ragu gets up. Baskar never worried about anything. Whether Ragu was home or not at home did not make any difference. When he was at home, he used to be busy for hours with

his office work or immersed in an English book. But at Baskar's house there was laughter and merriment always. "Dear kutty, Meena kutty" were the words you will hear always. Most of the time Meena will be complaining of back ache, leg pain and lying on bed, while Baskar will be cooking and serving her on bed. These stories were told by Meena to her. She only told her "you should make your husband learn to cook by complaining of sickness now and then. Otherwise, they will not learn anything."

One time, Pathmini felt sick and Ragu brought the doctor home and also his mother. Now and then he touched her forehead to check whether there is fever and went away. After that, even though Pathmini felt sick she never told him and went about doing, whatever she could. She thought that the world is of the opinion

“

Baskar was treating his wife as a treasure he received and was always praising and showing his love and affection in front of others.

”

that a husband who controls his wife is considered as a true male and people like Baskar who treated his wife as an angel and dotes her, is considered as afraid of his wife.

Pathmini was surprised by an event which happened in her life. One day a beautiful girl named Rose was appointed to work with Ragu in his office. She was so beautiful all the officemates were naturally attracted to her. Pathmini came to know this from Baskar. One day Baskar on his visit to her house, asked her to prepare coffee for him and let this news out. "Whenever a beautiful lady joins a new job, everyone will speak about her and this is usual," said Ragu and put an end to this conversation.

Rose went round Ragu most of the time and the others watching this started speaking about both of them. Some even said that it is

the fault of Ragu for giving room to her to go around him in the office. So Ragu was alerted after these remarks.

One day to Pathmini's surprise, "Pathu get dressed well and come to my office during lunch time and don't prepare anything at home, we will go out for lunch," said Ragu.

So she got dressed up better than the normal days and went to his office. He was waiting for her at the reception. As she arrived he held her hand and went about introducing her to all and said that she's the best cook and companion to me. He took her to Rose and introduced her as his wife and good companion sent by God as a gift and praised her for all what she's doing to him. Rose was upset over this and even Pathmini was perplexed as to whether this is Ragu, his own husband speaking like this.

After a few days, Rose got a transfer to another section. Pathmini was wondering whether this is also another version of masculinity.

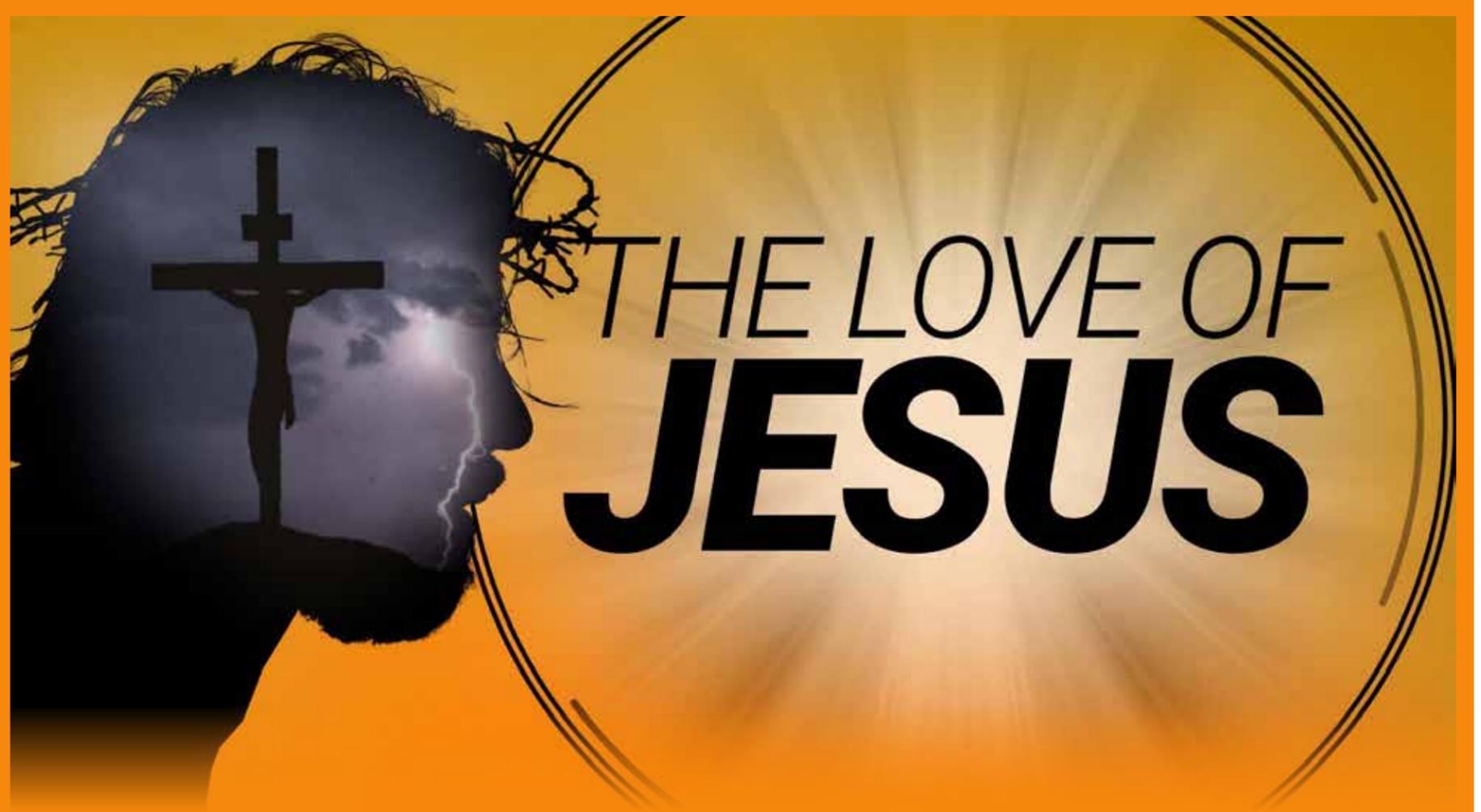
Both these families had no children. They consoled themselves by saying that, if it is the will of God, we must accept it. But Meena was very much worried about this and became sick. She passed away 6 months before Baskar's retirement. Baskar was upset about this but managed comfortably with his office work.

Ragu passed away after a year of retirement. Now Baskar alone in his apartment is sick and Pathmini in her apartment and is helping him whenever possible.

Suddenly she woke up from her day dreaming when Baskar called her name and said to stay with him with tears in his eyes. Pathmini thought he must have had a dream or may have been affected by the injection given by the nurse. Baskar continued "you are alone there and I am alone here. I know you never enjoyed life with Ragu. I have thought of marrying you the first day I saw you with Ragu and since he married you, I never told anyone. My Meena is nothing when compared to you. You come with me and live so that all my ailments will vanish." Pathmini never expected this from him and all her high estimates of him vanished in thin air and he expired from her mind.



SPECIAL FEATURE



By: J A Rajah

*I wandered lonely as a sinner,
Full of worries and sorrows,
All in a while, I met a cleric,
He told me of Jesus and his abundant,
Love for the redemption of humanity !!.
The way, the truth and the life.*

*His love is everlasting
Guaranteeing us eternal peace,
And deliverance from the burden of sin,
It is indeed a peace of mind,
That passeth all understanding,
Ensuring us eternal life !!.*

*When I see the world filled with darkness and evil,
The love of Jesus brings me great hope,
A hope that brings relief from the burden
Of sin and the desire to do good,
For fellow human beings
And live a life celebrating and displaying love !!.*

*For oft, when on my desperation,
I toil with a heavy heart,
I sing the songs of the love of Jesus,
My heart becomes overjoyed with spiritual outbursts,
Of love and adoration,
For the love of God and His abundant mercies .!!!*

SPECIAL FEATURE



Natrinal-12

ANKLETS TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO

By Kumar Punithavel

Natrinal is a classical Tamil poetic work and traditionally the first of the eight anthologies called Ettuthokai in Sangam literature. It contains both personal (love) and public (war, and other activities) categories of poems. This anthology called Natrinal



consists of four hundred poems in all, mainly eight to thirteen lines each. It is believed to be in the late Sangam era which dates from 100 to 300. Common era.

The four hundred poems of Natrinal are credited to 175 ancient Tamil poets. It is interesting to note some of its lines were borrowed into later Tamil works of post Sangam knowingly or unknowingly. It should be noted the language hasn't changed much in two thousand years.

This twelfth poem on the anthology titled Natrinal is composed by a poet named Kayamanar, in a setting as if a friend of the heroine is expressing the scene to the hero at the time of eloping, and explaining the reason for the tearing of the heroine. Guess eloping is not new, it had happened two thousand years ago among the Tamils who lived in Tamil Nation too. In this incident not that the dame is too enthusiastic about the whole episode for she will miss her past life, as the lovers would go to a far-off land to settle. Indeed, it would be a very painful experience for the dame. Memories will linger for a long time, and she will miss her friends. Indeed, she was tearing. Let us see how the friend unfolds the situation in this poem written two thousand years ago.

The heroine's friend describes the time and venue when the elope took place. It was very early in the morning. Everyone in the neighbourhood was asleep, and the heroine stealthily followed her lover who was waiting for her outside the house. While stealthily walking towards the door the sweet fragrant smell of the wood apple draws her attention from the pot where it has been kept to ripe the previous day.

The aroma from the wood apple in the pot to ripe smells,

விளம்பழம் கமழும் கமஞ்சூற் குழிசிப்

Had it been any other time she would have been the first to crack wood apple and taste the fruit, but the need to move on was so great she moved on with the mission of fleeing. Next her attention is drawn by her hearing sense. She hears the noise of the worn-out churning rod which is put into use early morning to churn out ghee from the fermented curd.

It was the time when worn-out churn rods, To make ghee sounds it makes in,

பாசம் தின்ற தேய் கால் மத்தம் நெய் தெரி இயக்கம் வெளில்முதல் முழங்கும்

In the dawn hour she covers herself with a blanket walking

out stealthily, and to avoid any chiming sound from the anklets she quietly bends down and removes the anklets on her feet.

Early morning, covers herself she to dispel noise

Anklets may make she removes the pair,

வைகு புலர் விடியல் மெய் கரந்து, தன் கால் அரி அமை சிலம்பு கழீஇ,

She sneakily covers herself and tip toes. In order to avoid making a sound she had already removed both her anklets and left them on the ground. As she bends down to remove the anklets, she sees two balls which she used to play in the company of her friends. She leaves her two-beautiful line drawn balls which will not be touched ever in the future. It will be memorabilia for her friends to think of her.

Recalling the ball game with her friends

Let me leave the two lined balls as souvenir

பல் மாண்

5

வரி புனை பந்தொடு வைஇய செல்வோள்

She leaves that too back with tears pooling her eyes and memories lingering in the heart as she follows you, her lover. She also felt they too will feel sad missing her.

Thinking they will miss her makes her sad

Her eyes tears as she follows you

“இவை காண்தோறும் நோவர் மாதேர் அளியரோ அளியர் என் ஆயத்தோர்!” என நும்மொடு வரவு தான் அயரவும், தன் வரைத்து அன்றியும் கலுழ்ந்தன கண்ணே.

10

Let's read the whole poem together again in English and Tamil.

The aroma fills from the wood apple in the pot to ripe smells,

It was the time when worn-out churn rods,

To make ghee sounds it makes in,

Early morning, covers herself she to dispel noise

Anklets may make she removes the pair,

Recalling the ball game with her friends

Let me leave the two lined balls as memento

Thinking they will miss her makes her sad

Her eyes tears as she follows you

விளம்பழம் கமழும் கமஞ்சூற் குழிசிப் பாசம் தின்ற தேய் கால் மத்தம் நெய் தெரி இயக்கம் வெளில்முதல் முழங்கும் வைகு புலர் விடியல் மெய் கரந்து, தன் கால் அரி அமை சிலம்பு கழீஇ, பல் மாண் 5 வரி புனை பந்தொடு வைஇய செல்வோள், “இவை காண்தோறும் நோவர் மாதேர் அளியரோ அளியர் என் ஆயத்தோர்!” என நும்மொடு வரவு தான் அயரவும், தன் வரைத்து அன்றியும் கலுழ்ந்தன கண்ணே.

10

The above elope happened more than two thousand years ago among lovers during the Tamil Sangam era. Even to this day parents and family do intervene among their children's love affairs with various phobias and paranoias of their own. It may be cast creed, even religion and race. But at other times they proudly proclaim what another Sangam era poet said. It is Kanian Poonkundranar who said 'World is my hamlet and humanity my kin'. Well, we Tamils have been chased away from our home land with racial violences, and taken the world as our hamlet. It is time now we take humanity as our kin.



SPECIAL FEATURE

AMERICA AND THE WORLD IN TRUMP'S SECOND PRESIDENCY

By: J A Rajah

Donald Trump became the president of America for the second time on January 20th 2025. The new leadership carries the hopes and dreams of millions who voted for him. Americans want the country's economy to get better. Many have concluded that the number of people who voted for Trump wanted to ensure the country's economy would become healthier.

A. Immigration Control:

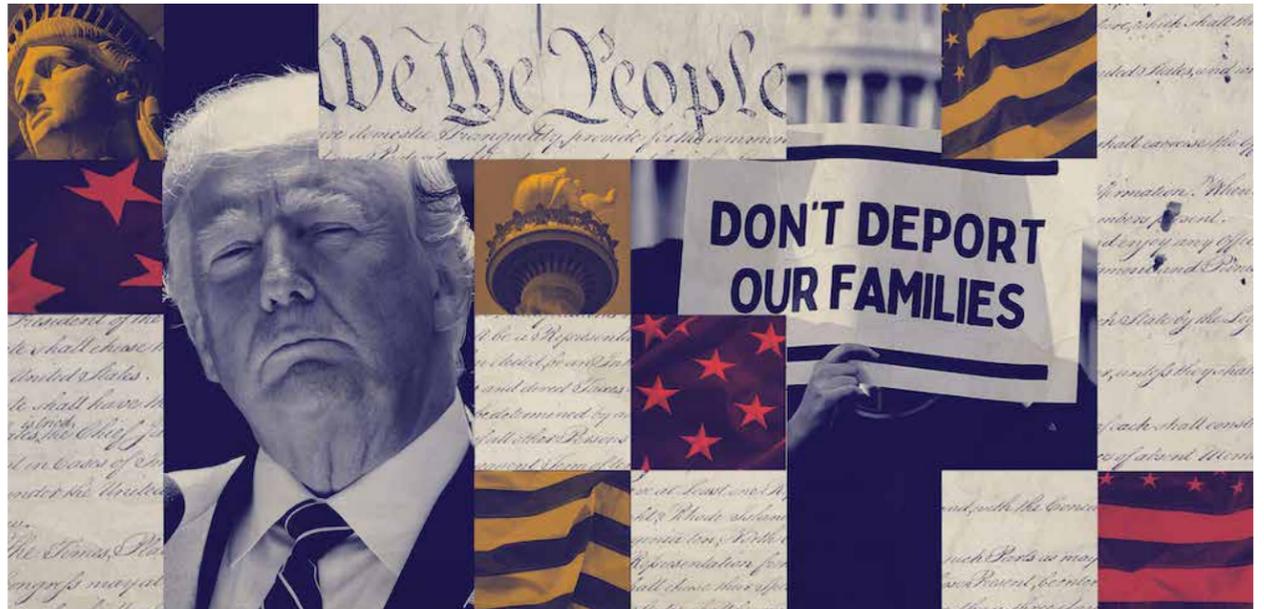
Many citizens want to see the US border controlled more tightly and also like the tidal waves of illegal immigrants using up their financial resources to be directed to fulfil their own needs. They wanted to see their children's minds shaped by an education that would help them lead happy lives by enabling them to 'live and let live'. Americans decided they needed something different. America's change in government will do far more than affect the lives of its government. Whether or not it should be, America is the world's leading nation. The nation's unchallenged power and authority across the globe could foster global peace and prosperity for decades after World War II at levels unheard of in human history- even if some of that peace was more pretence than reality.

B. America's Preponderance:

Whether or not the US is the indispensable nation it once was, it still holds a combination of power, wealth and influence in world affairs that no other nation can match. If America catches a cold, the rest of the world sneezes. Changes in the US would automatically or, in the long run, lead to changes in the rest of the world.

C. The US and World Problems:

The US has to deal with the world conflict 'zones'. For instance, Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, longs for American money and military support to continue flowing into its war chests. Meanwhile, his opponent, Russian President Vladimir Putin, hopes to find a US president who is more sympathetic to his interests and desirous of a peaceful end that allows him to retain the Ukrainian territory he has taken and save his face in his nation.



In the Middle East, many are hopeful that will help in reducing the onslaught of genocide in the area. The Gaza Strip is the melting pot where the Palestinians and Israel are at loggerheads. Some of Trump's ideas are so far-fetched that he might worsen the situation than solve it. At the same time, he angered many in the Arab world when he moved the US embassy to Jerusalem; the Abraham Accords signed during his administration-involving Israel, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the UAE-were the most substantial peace agreement in the region since Israel's establishment in 1948. Some have even speculated that Saudi Arabia's potential support for such peace might have contributed to Hama's decision to launch its aberrant attack on October 7th, 2023, hoping to bring chaos to the region and undermine those peaceful overtures. Still, many hope that America under Mr. Trump will relaunch his administration's earlier efforts, perhaps even ending the Gaza conflict. On the other hand, Trump's plan to take over Gaza is bound to create more calamity in the region.

In the U.K., Prime Minister Starmer, in the past, expressed great disdain for Trump. Across Europe, leaders worried about Trump's America First declarations may be wondering whether long-standing American money, support, and protection will begin to dry up. If so, they may look eastwards instead of westwards for new alliances and partners. Around the world, nations with nationalist or populist leaders will likely seek new administrations to support their efforts. On the other hand, President Xi Jinping of China is not happy with Trump. While Mr. Trump has boasted

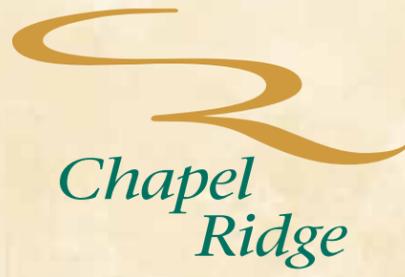
of his rapport with the leader of the world's second-most populous nation, his promise to return to punitive trade tariffs will keep Xi interested in what America chooses to do over the next four years.

D. Trade Tariffs:

Trump's tariffs on goods imported from Mexico, Canada, and China would seriously affect international trade. The tariffs would affect business inputs more than finished goods. The American tariff would hit key industries like energy, mining, and pharmaceuticals the hardest. Trump's 'Put America First' policy is behind all these actions. Trump has also withdrawn US support to the UN and the European Union. These are bound to affect the peace and prosperity of the world at large. The general cost of living might go up. Though some of Trump's actions might promote peace in some parts of the world, like Ukraine and the Middle East, they should be diluted with humanitarian inputs and programs.

E. Trump's need for a better Frame of Mind:

Though he claims to promote Christian principles, his selfish actions work in the opposite direction. Foreign ministers of the world's free countries have met officials in the White House to encourage counter suggestions to express their opposition to Trump's trade actions. The world needs the support of a leading nation like the USA with its resources and power. President Trump should recover his senses and be guided by the religious sentiments he spectacularly exhibits with his songs and praises.



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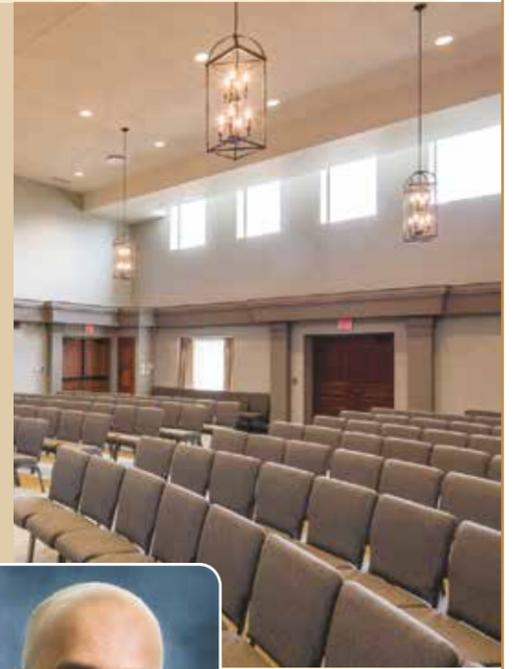
உங்கள் உறவொன்றை பிரிந்து தடுமாறும் வேளையில் இறுதி நிகழ்வுகள் பற்றிய கவலை உங்களுக்கு வேண்டாம். அனுபவத்துடன் கூடிய அன்பான சேவையை வழங்குகின்றோம்.

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THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIFE

The Values I Learned from my Family

By: Jerina Jesman
Grade 10 Student

Growing up in a family that values love, respect and hard work has shaped the person I am today. These three values have been instilled in me from a young age, and they continue to guide my actions and decisions in life. Each value has taught me important lessons, not only through direct teaching but also by watching my family members live them everyday. These values have given me a strong foundation, and they continue to impact how I interact with others, face challenges, and approach life in general. I will discuss the three core values I learned from my family: love, respect and hard work, and explain how they continue to shape who I am.



Jerina Jesman
Grade 10 Student

The first and most significant value that I earned from my family is love. Love, in my family, has always been more than just an emotion; it has been a constant, unwavering support system. My parents made sure that I understood that no matter what happens in life, love is something that will always be there to keep us grounded. This love was expressed not only through words but also through actions. I remember as a child, whenever I faced challenges or difficulties, my parents would always be there to listen and offer encouragement. They made me feel heard, understood and most importantly, loved. This unconditional love has been a source of strength for me throughout my life. It has taught me the importance of showing affection and care to those who are close to me.

Love in my family was not only about comforting each other in hard times but also about celebrating each other's successes. Whether it was a school achievement or personal milestone, my family always made sure to acknowledge and celebrate the little victories. This taught me that love is not just about offering support during tough times, but also about lifting others up during moments of joy. Love in my family is always unconditional and boundless, which has shaped my own approach to relationships. I strive to show love and appreciation to the people I care about, not just in difficult moments, but also in the good times, reminding them how much they mean to me. This amazing foundation of love has given me the ability to form deep meaningful relationships and understand the importance of emotional connections.

The second value that I learned is respect. In my household, respect was considered essential in every interaction, whether it was between family members, friends or even strangers. My parents emphasized the importance of treating others with kindness and dignity, no matter who they were. Respect was not just about being polite but also about genuinely valuing others and their perspectives. Growing up, I saw how my parents treated each other with respect, and they taught me

that respect should be mutual. This value extended beyond how we treated each other within the family. It also influenced how we interacted with the outside world. From a young age, my parents instilled in me the idea that everyone deserves to be treated with respect, regardless of their background, beliefs or opinions.

At the dinner table, I remember how we would often have discussions about various topics, and my parents would encourage us to share our thoughts openly. However, they always reminded us to listen attentively and respect others' opinions, even if we did not agree. This environment of respectful communication helped me develop the ability to engage with people from different walks of life. It also taught me the importance of understanding and empathy. In a world where differences often create conflict, the value of respect has become a guiding principle for me. I now make an effort to approach every conversation with an open mind, recognizing that everyone has their own unique perspective shaped by their own experiences. By respecting others, I have been able to form deeper connections and engage in more meaningful conversation both personally and professionally.

The third value that my family instilled in me is the importance of hard work. My parents were always hard working individuals and they made it clear that success does not come easily. Whether it was at work, school or in daily life, my parents taught me the value of putting in the effort to achieve my goals. I remember watching my father and mother come home after long hours of work and still managing to find time to help with homework or assist around the house. Similarly, my mother, who juggles work and household responsibilities, always showed me the importance of dedication and perseverance.

This value has influenced my approach to challenges and setbacks. Instead of giving up when faced with difficulties, I learned to approach problems with a solution oriented mindset. Hard work taught me that success often comes after persistence and determination. With this mindset, I have overcome obstacles in my own life, whether it was struggling with a different class or dealing with personal setbacks. I have learned that the journey may not

always be easy, but the effort I put in will eventually pay off. My family's emphasis on hard work also taught me to take pride in the process, not just the outcome. By focusing on the task at hand and giving my best effort, I have found that I can achieve more than I ever thought possible.

These three values of love, respect and hard work have become the foundation of my life. They have shaped the way I approach my relationships, my goals and my daily decisions. The love I received from my family has shown me the importance of nurturing relationships and offering support to others especially during the time of need. The respect I learned has allowed me to engage with others in a way that values their perspectives and encourages open minded conversations. The hard work I saw taught me how to overcome challenges and achieve my goals.

These values are not just ideals that I hold dear; they are principles that guide my actions every day. They have shaped the way I approach my relationships, my goals and my daily decisions. I am grateful for the love, respect and hard work that my family has taught me. These values have become a part of my identity, and I will continue to pass them on to future generations. Through love, respect and hard work, I have learned that we can make a positive impact on the world around us and build meaningful connections with those we care about.



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MADE BY WATERLOO

Discover how Waterloo alumni are driving Canada's economy with five tech companies making a local and global impact

By Angelica Marie Sanchez
University Relations

Many of the world's leading innovation ecosystems share a common feature: a world-class research university at their core. The University of Waterloo has played a pivotal role in establishing the Waterloo region as a premier innovation ecosystem in Canada.

You have probably heard of game-changing success stories like BlackBerry, OpenText and Desire to Learn (D2L). But did you know that more than 562 Waterloo alumni have raised venture capital in the last decade? It's why Pitchbook ranks Waterloo as the top Canadian school for entrepreneurs — where groundbreaking ideas become a reality.

Waterloo region has become celebrated as Canada's tech capital with some of the country's fastest-growing companies planting their roots in the city. Here are five companies founded by Waterloo alumni — whose offices may even be in your neighbourhood — that are making waves locally and globally.

Alchemy

What began as a fourth-year capstone project for Waterloo alumni Chong Shen (BASc '13) and Khanjan Desai (BASc '13) to keep windshields frost-free



Waterloo alumni, Pablo Molina (BASc '11) and Faizan Sheikh (BASc '11) with Avidbots' flagship product, NEO, the world's smartest autonomous floor scrubbing robots.



Alchemy's ExoShield windshield protection film being applied to an automotive vehicle.

has blossomed into a remarkable success story for Alchemy. Waterloo supported Alchemy's journey, providing initial funding through the Velocity incubator and access to on-campus lab space. As Alchemy began to take off, Shen and Desai received additional funding from the University. They successfully applied to the renowned Y Combinator business accelerator in California, while maintaining their offices in Kitchener.

Today, Alchemy develops cutting-edge nanotechnology products for the automotive and defense industries. Their ExoShield windshield protection film offers abrasion-resistant and frost prevention coatings, providing a best-in-class windshield-protection solution with 500 active installers across 57 countries. Their nanocomposite coating provides next-generation multi-spectral camouflage for defense purposes. Over the past two years, Alchemy has partnered with the Canadian Armed Forces to develop this technology for uniforms and shields. In 2025, Alchemy received \$1.8 million in funding from the Government of Canada through the Federal

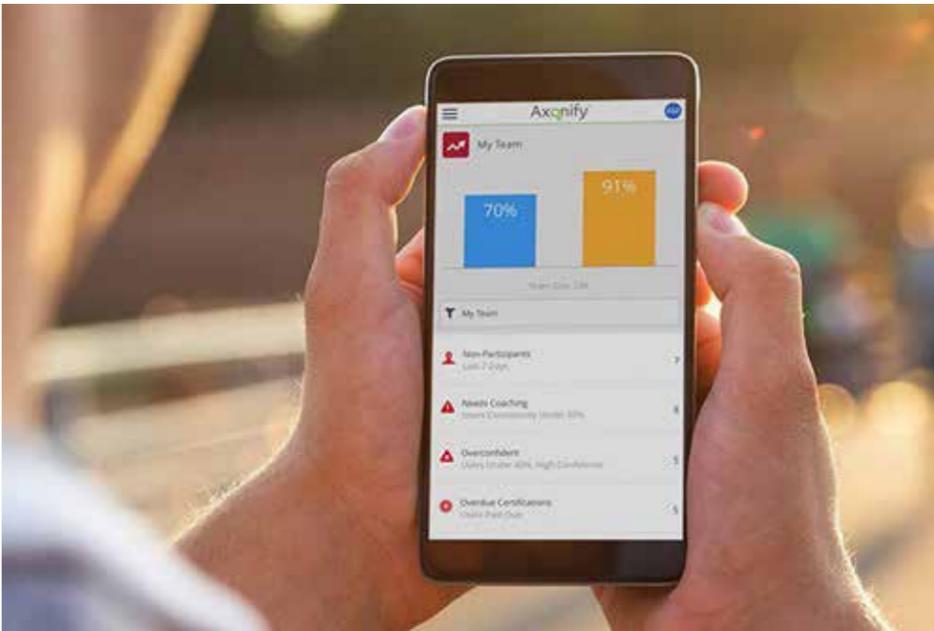
Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) to grow and scale their business.

Avidbots

Waterloo alumni, Pablo Molina (BASc '11) and Faizan Sheikh (BASc '11), are revolutionizing the cleaning industry with Avidbots — the world's smartest autonomous floor scrubbing robots. Their flagship product, NEO, is equipped with advanced mapping and navigation capabilities, allowing the robots to clean large areas autonomously. The company's vision is to make robots more widespread in the cleaning industry, unlocking human potential and improving cleanliness standards locally and globally.

In 2014, Avidbots joined Velocity as an early-stage startup to develop their product and maintained their relationship with the incubator over the years. Despite their global success, Molina and Sheikh decided to stay close to the University by keeping their headquarters in Kitchener to access the startup ecosystem, and the region's research and engineering talent.

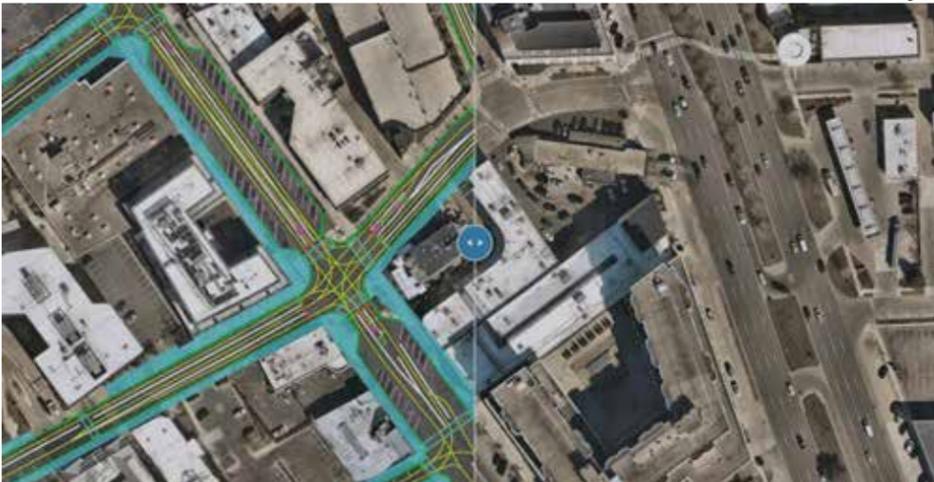
Avidbots' partnership with Waterloo RoboHub leverages the expertise of researchers and students to enhance the company's robotics technology. Since 2018, the company has continued to hire co-op students and full-time employees,



Axonify's software on a mobile device. Axonify provides businesses with a personalized learning solution for frontline employees. - Photo credit: Axonify

many of whom are Waterloo Engineering graduates.

In 2020, Avidbots partnered with DHL to deploy NEO in commercial spaces such as airports, warehouses and shopping malls. Avidbots was recognized among Deloitte's 2020 Technology Fast 50, and 2021 Technology Fast 500. In 2023, the Narwhal Project included Avidbots as part of the Narwhal List of Canadian technology companies



GeoMate's technology captures high resolution geospatial imagery. - Photo credit: GeoMate

that received more than \$10 million of capital and are on their way to unicorn status. With customers in over a dozen countries across five continents, Avidbots has global offices in Chicago, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Colombia.

Axonify

Co-founder and CEO of Axonify, Carol Leaman (BA'89, MAcc '89, DLitt '22) is a trailblazer in the software sector, specializing in personalized learning solutions for frontline employees. Axonify provides businesses with employee training software that uses brain science and AI for microlearning and daily reinforcement, catering to various industries.

Axonify hires Waterloo co-op

students in various roles and many students have returned to the company upon graduation as full-time employees, enabling Axonify to streamline their recruitment process and build a talented workforce. In 2022, Leaman received an honorary doctorate

from Waterloo for her impact as an entrepreneur and thought leader in the region.

In 2021, Axonify celebrated a milestone by increasing its workforce by 15 per cent across North America and Europe, with a focus on Eastern Canada. Currently, 780 full-time employees work at Axonify, which is headquartered in Waterloo. Axonify's software is used by more than 250

companies, including Lowe's, Kroger, Walmart and Citizens Bank.

GeoMate

GeoMate, co-founded by Dr. Nastaran Saberi (PhD '19) and Dr. Amin Gharebaghi, is at the forefront of innovating

urban planning and autonomous driving mapping solutions with artificial intelligence (AI). GeoMate's technology enables precise and cost-effective mapping of mid-sized cities in just four weeks, all without any fieldwork. Their innovation provides high precision and regular updates, tailored for urban planners and leaders in autonomous driving.

In 2019, Geomate joined the Grebel Peace Incubator at Waterloo's Conrad Grebel University College. Through the incubator, GeoMate completed pilot projects in Stratford and Kitchener, working with local political leaders to help them improve their accessibility. In 2020, Saberi presented GeoMate at the Velocity Fund Pitch Competition. GeoMate was selected as part of

the ten finalists and joined the incubator.

More recently, GeoMate secured funding from FedDev Ontario to develop an advanced simulation platform for autonomous driving across 10 major cities in Ontario, further fueling their mission to transform urban landscapes. GeoMate's headquarters are in the Communitech building in downtown Kitchener, where they employ Waterloo co-op students and alumni as employees.

Miovision

Founded by Kurtis McBride (BASC '04, MASc '07), Miovision addresses traffic problems by collecting multimodal traffic data and uncovering actionable insights, helping municipalities optimize



Miovision Scout, the first portable solution that collects multimodal traffic data and video at the roadside.

their road networks and improve traffic flow. Miovision's technology enhances overall mobility, reduces vehicle congestion and user delays on city roadways, resulting in better fuel economy and lower CO2 emissions.

McBride came up with the idea for Miovision while on a co-op work placement at a transportation consultancy. Since 2005, Miovision's systems have assisted nearly 2,000 customers in 63 countries, including five major cities in Canada. Miovision was recognized among Deloitte's 2024 Technology Fast 50 list and received the Canadian Innovation award from the Canadian Innovation Exchange. Currently, Miovision employs 400 employees including Waterloo co-op students.

These five companies exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative mindset fostered by Waterloo. However, they are only a small reflection of Waterloo's broader impact on nurturing talent and providing support to entrepreneurs at each stage of their journey.



MARKHAM INTRODUCES MILLIE: CANADA'S FIRST MUNICIPAL MASCOT AND LATEST VERSION OF CITY'S LEADING-EDGE AI CHATBOT

Markham is once again making history! The City of Markham is excited to announce Canada's first municipal mascot, Millie the butterfly, introducing a new approach to how the City interacts with its residents. Millie will also be the face of Chatbot 3.0, an enhanced virtual assistant available on the City's website that is powered by cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) technology. Chatbot 3.0 provides a new level of interactivity and convenience to markham.ca visitors.

The City's goal with Millie is to build connections with families and children as they work to build a life-long relationship with Markham. Millie is the host of our annual award-winning Markham-Milliken Children's Festival and also represents Markham's growth as a municipality. The several colours of Millie's wings are meant to represent the diversity of Markham's residents. Be on the lookout this year for Millie, as they will be attending various City events and programs.

Millie's mission is to bring people together and represent the values of hope, inclusivity, and acceptance. Much like Millie's hometown of Markham, Ontario, butterflies are known for transformation, creativity, and infinite potential. Markham has always been customer-focused, and Millie aims to bring exceptional services to the people with a smile.

"Millie is a vibrant symbol of our dedication to uniting the community. Updating our Chatbot ensures our city remains a trailblazer in technological innovation," said Mayor Frank Scarpitti. "Our priority is providing our residents with seamless 24/7 access to accurate information whenever they seek it. We are relentless in our pursuit of innovation in the AI space, continually exploring new ways to serve our community better and embody the attributes of Canada's high-tech capital. Markham has proudly received numerous national accolades for our pioneering use of artificial intelligence, including awards for Elections Markham and pothole detection technology for our road maintenance. Markham exemplifies what it means to be the

city of the future!"

Enhanced Chatbot 3.0 Features and Benefits

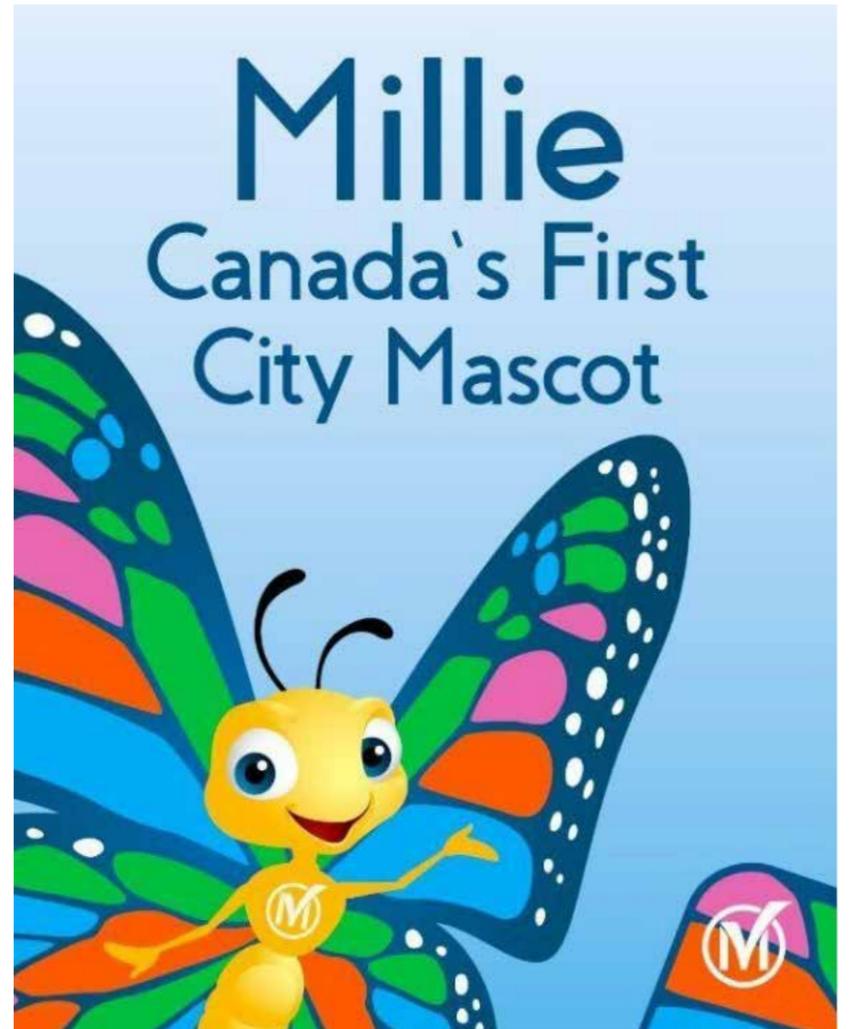
- Leverage several leading AI technologies: Millie utilizes a combination of technologies, including Comm100, Open AI and IBM Watson assistant, to deliver precise answers by crawling data from our official website, ensuring that users receive the most up-to-date and relevant information. The service still allows users to speak to a virtual agent.

- User-Friendly Interface: With Millie as the face of our chatbot, users can enjoy a more engaging and personable interaction, making it easier to find information and connect to our contact centre agents if further assistance is needed.

- 24/7 Availability: Millie is available around the clock, providing assistance whenever you need it, day or night via the City of Markham website at markham.ca.

In 2020, Markham was the first municipality in Canada to use the AI-enabled virtual agent "IBM Watson Assistant for Citizens" to offer 24-hour customer service for residents looking for reliable, consistent, and accurate COVID-19 information.

In 2022, the "Elections Markham Virtual Assistant, powered by Watson Assistant," was launched, making it easy for voters to find information about the 2022 Markham Municipal Election. After supporting both the municipal election and receiving a total of more than 42,791 COVID-19 inquiries, the COVID-19 Virtual Assistant was retired in 2023, making way for the improved all-purpose Virtual Assistant 2.0. The service combines technologies from both Comm100



and IBM to provide a virtual assistant with live chat features.

The City of Markham has always been at the forefront of technological innovation, continuously striving to improve the quality of life for our residents. The introduction of Millie is a testament to our commitment to leveraging technology to enhance public services. This initiative builds on the success of our previous virtual assistant, which has been instrumental in providing efficient and effective support to our community.

About Markham:

Markham, an award-winning municipality with over 366,000 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.



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- Washroom
- Private Balconies



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UNIT-19
715 sq.ft.

3rd
FLOOR



Two Bedrooms Unit
- Two Bedrooms
- Living Area
- Kitchen
- Two Washrooms
- Private Balcony



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.

EASTER EGG HUNT

DTA held its annual Easter Egg Hunt and was thrilled by the overwhelming support and attendance from the community. The event was a great success, filled with food, games, and fun for the whole family. A big thank you to the youth and adult volunteers whose hard work made the day such a success.



TWO DAY TRIP TO PITTSBURGH

DTA recently completed a successful two-day trip to Pittsburgh with a group of members. Everyone returned safely and happily, making it a truly memorable experience. A heartfelt thank you to all the DTA volunteers whose efforts made this trip possible.

CHERRY BLOSSOM DAY

DTA took a group of excited members to High Park to experience the annual Cherry Blossom Festival. Despite the chilly weather, everyone enjoyed a fun-filled day together. It was another memorable outing for the lucky members who joined. A heartfelt thank you to the dedicated volunteers whose support made this trip possible.



DTA'S HOMELAND PROJECTS

DTA's Homeland Projects DTA is proud to announce that we have completed over 100 homeland projects as of Mar 31, 2025. 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.

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 @ DURHAMDAMILS.ORG
TEL: 905-428-7007

YOGA INSTRUCTOR
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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

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 L1S 2H6

Durham Region

Serving Eight Municipalities

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

For More Information Visit the website:
dtaseniorsinhomesupport.ca

Volunteers Needed!

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

Volunteer Gala : Twice a Year!

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

Financed 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)

DTA'S VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION NIGHT

DTA is an organization powered by the dedication and commitment of its many volunteers, who work tirelessly to ensure the success of every event and program. To recognize their invaluable contributions, DTA hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Night to honor those who help keep everything running smoothly. As always, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our volunteers for their unwavering support and readiness to step in whenever needed.



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.

Isai Mazhai | இசை மழை நேரம்

FAMILY KARAOKE

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

EVERY FRIDAY
8:00 PM - 9:30 PM

பாடுவோர் பாடலாம்

Open to Moms, Dads, Kids, Youth and friends Join us for a fun night of singing and smiles

Location: DTA Center 66 Harwood Ave S Ajax Phone# 905-428-7007

Website: durhamtamils.org

DTA SENIOR'S FEB MONTHLY MEETING

DTA Senior's March monthly meeting will be held on Sunday May 25, 2025 at 5:00 pm at DTA Centre. 66B Harwood Ave S, Ajax L1S 2H6.

Event Time: 5-9 pm
Please all Senior (ages 55+) members attend the meeting.

Register online - durhamtamils.org

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

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

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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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

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DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION

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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



City of Brampton and Peel District School Board celebrate the opening of a new joint-use cricket pitch at Turner Fenton Secondary School

This new recreation amenity showcases the value of collaboration in delivering another successful project

Today, the City of Brampton, in partnership with the Peel District School Board (PDSB), marked the completion and official opening of the new cricket pitch at Turner Fenton Secondary School. The new cricket pitch will serve as a hub for both casual and competitive play. With an artificial turf wicket and player pavilions, this fully lit pitch is a space for both students at Turner Fenton Secondary School and the public to use. Students will have access to the pitch during the school day, and outside of school hours, the City will have priority access and opportunities to rent the pitch to community sports groups.

More than just a recreational space, the pitch is an extension of the Peel District School Board's physical education curriculum and interschool athletics programming. By providing a high-quality facility on school grounds, this project supports student engagement, daily physical activity and overall well-being. Whether in class, through clubs or on interschool teams, students have opportunities to build skills, confidence and healthy habits in a supportive environment. In alignment with PDSB's 2024-2028 Multi-Year Strategic Plan, the pitch reflects a commitment to creating spaces that inspire excellence and foster active, connected school communities.

This approximately \$2.6 million investment into sports infrastructure is one of several joint-use amenity projects in the partnership between the City of Brampton and PDSB. Recently completed projects include the Sandalwood Heights Secondary School Track revitalization, the Central Peel Turf Field and Basketball Courts and the construction of a new Collaborative Learning and Technology Centre (CLTC), adjacent to Central Peel Secondary School.

This new amenity builds on the City's efforts to connect more people to the sport, including construction of the new Earnscliffe Park Cricket Facility, the largest cricket dome in the country and recreation programs that create skill development opportunities for players of all levels through the Youth Cricket League and Brampton Sports League.

Quotes

"Brampton is the cricket capital of Canada, and the opening of this new cricket pitch at Turner Fenton Secondary School is another milestone in our commitment to growing the sport and making it more accessible. Through strong partnerships like the one we have with the Peel District School Board, we are investing in the future of cricket and providing new opportunities for residents of all ages to stay active and connected through sport."

- **Patrick Brown**, Mayor, City of Brampton

"This project is a great example of how collaboration between the City and our education partners can create inclusive, shared spaces that benefit both students and the wider community. As demand for



City of Brampton, Peel District School Board and students from Turner Fenton Secondary School mark official opening of new cricket pitch. Credit: City of Brampton

cricket continues to grow, investments like this ensure that youth and families across Brampton can enjoy the game, build skills and foster a deeper sense of community and belonging."

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



"The opening of this new cricket pitch at Turner Fenton Secondary School is a real celebration of community. Sport has an incredible ability to bring people together—breaking down barriers, building bridges and creating lasting connections. We are proud to partner with the City of Brampton on projects like this that reflect our shared commitment to student well-being and community engagement. This pitch is a space where students can stay active, grow their teamwork skills and feel connected through a sport they love."

- **David Green**,
Chair, Peel District School Board

"The accessibility of this new cricket pitch is a great example of school pride meeting community fun. After all, the future of cricket starts at the grassroots and that means schools. We are incredibly grateful to the City of Brampton for helping build the foundation for the next generation of players and fans of the sport."

- **Kathy McDonald**,
Trustee Brampton Wards 3 & 4, Peel
District School Board

"Cricket is an increasingly popular sport among our students, and this new facility is a meaningful investment in their physical wellness, social connection and sense of belonging. We are proud to offer inclusive spaces that encourage everyone to get involved. Through our ongoing collaboration with the City of Brampton, we are building vibrant learning environments, both in the classroom and beyond, that reflect the interests and needs of the communities we serve."

- **Rashmi Swarup**,
Director of Education, Peel District School Board

Additional Resources

Brampton is the Cricket Capital of Canada

Cricket is the fastest-growing sport in Brampton and worldwide. The City is committed to supporting individuals who play cricket in the community and to attracting new players to the game.

The City of Brampton will continue to prioritize making the sport more accessible to all residents. For more information about cricket in Brampton, visit brampton.ca/cricket.

Cricket in Brampton highlights

- Brampton is home to 22 cricket sites and growing!
- On March 25, the City of Brampton broke ground to begin work on the new Earnscliffe Park Cricket Facility, a \$25 million investment to bring the largest cricket dome in the country to Brampton, which offers cricket year-round.
- Through the 2025 Budget, the City of Brampton is investing approximately \$10 million over the next two years to equip local cricket facilities with lighting and other enhancements.
- In 2024, the City of Brampton launched the Youth Cricket League, which connected more youth to the sport. After a successful debut that saw nearly 100 participants, the league was expanded to add a spring session for 2025 for more opportunities to play.
- In summer 2024, the City of Brampton hosted the GT20 Tournament for a third year, welcoming some of the top international cricket players and some of the biggest names in the sport.
- The City's cricket amenities host 70 unique seasonal organizations, tournaments and individuals that book over 19,000 hours of field time.
- The City Lands is a proposed redevelopment of the municipal-owned site at Kennedy Road South, Highway 410 and 407, at the CAA sports and entertainment facility that includes a new state-of-the-art, multi-purpose cricket facility.

About the City of Brampton

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, Brampton is home to nearly 800,000 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, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Learn more at brampton.ca.

About Peel District School Board (PDSB)

The Peel District School Board (PDSB) is a racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse board that serves nearly 150,000 students in 259 schools across Brampton, Caledon, and Mississauga. PDSB is the second largest school board in Canada as well as the largest employer in Peel Region. Learn more at www.peelschools.org and connect with us on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram.



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

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

Entertainment and activities

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

Visit an outdoor skating rink

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

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

Skate rental hours

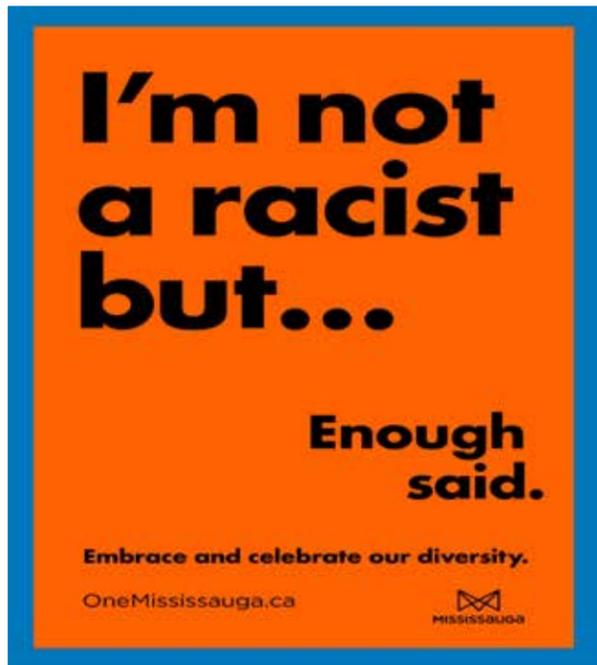
- Weekdays: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Weekends: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

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

Skate rental prices

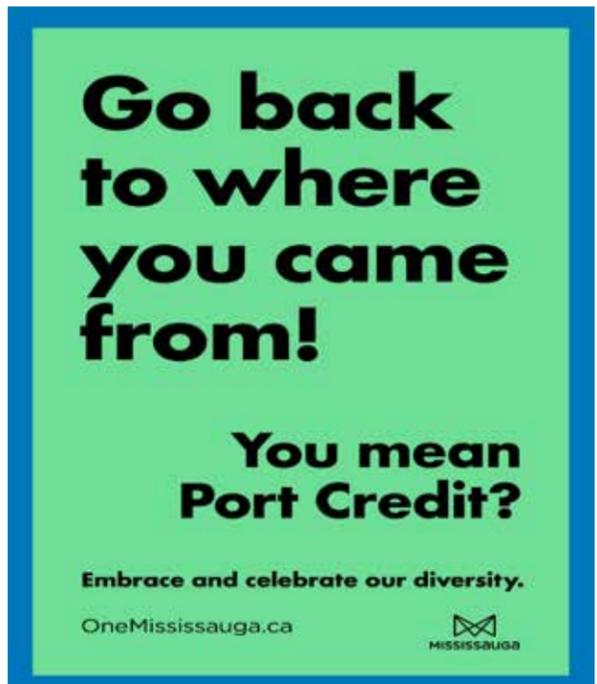
- Children (12 years & under): \$10
- Adult: \$15
- Helmet rental: \$5
- Skate sharpening: \$10
- Skate aid: \$10

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



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

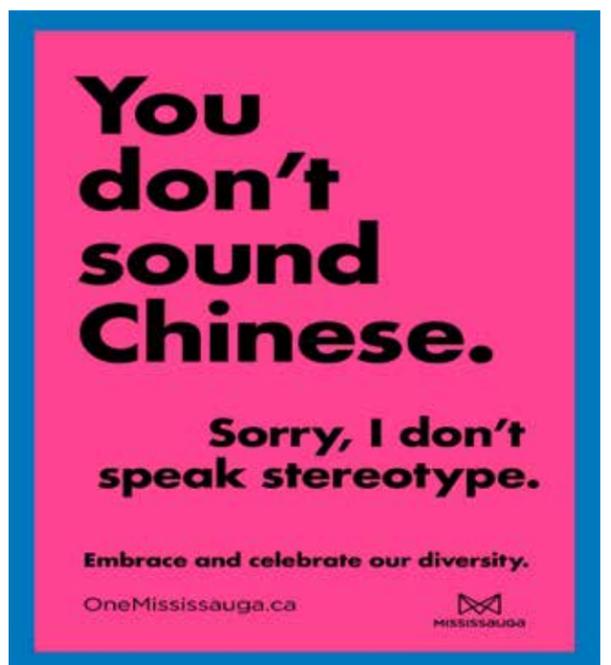
making it easier for everyone to stay connected, post their favourite photos online or connect to apps they enjoy.



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

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

You can also warm up on our heated patios. Skaters can also enjoy tasty snack at Dimkin Crepes or the Wow Zone. There is also free WiFi,





SPECIAL FEATURE

LORD RAMA, 7th OF DASAVATARAMS OF VISHNU

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

INTRODUCTION



Lord Rama was the seventh avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, who killed the demon King Ravana and restored dharma on earth. Lord Rama is known as *Maryada Purushottam*, which translates to *Supreme Person of Righteousness*. This title emphasizes His adherence to moral and ethical conduct, making Him the ideal embodiment of righteousness. Lord Rama's commitment to upholding social norms and moral boundaries sets Him apart as the epitome of virtuous living. Lord Rama's life serves as a model for individuals seeking to live a life of virtue and purpose.

LORD RAMA: THE IDEAL AVATAR

Rama, the perfect avatar of the Supreme Protector Vishnu, is an all-time favourite among Hindu deities. The most popular symbol of chivalry and virtue, Rama, in the words of *Swami Vivekananda*, is the embodiment of truth, morality, the ideal son, the husband and above all, the ideal king. As the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu, Rama is said to have taken birth on earth to annihilate the evil forces of the age. He is widely believed to be an actual historical figure, a tribal hero of ancient India, whose exploits from the great Hindu epic *Ramayana*, written by the ancient Sanskrit poet *Valmiki*. To many, Rama is hardly different in looks from Lord Vishnu or Krishna. He is most often represented as a standing figure, with an arrow in His right hand, a bow in His left and a quiver on His back. A Rama statue is also usually accompanied by statues of His wife Sita, His brother Lakshmana and the legendary monkey attendant, Hanuman. He is depicted in princely adornments

with a *tilak* on His forehead, and as having a dark, almost bluish complexion, which shows His affinity with Vishnu and Krishna. The prefix *Shri* to Rama indicates that Rama is always associated with *Shri*, the essence of the four Vedas.

DIVINE BIRTH OF LORD RAMA

In *Treta Yuga*, one of the four cyclic yugas described in religious books, *Dasaratha* was the King of Ayodhya. He had three wives, namely, *Kausalya*, *Sumitra* and *Kaikeyi*. He belonged to the clan of the *Sun* known as *Suryavanshi*. He was a great king and he had helped demi-Gods to defeat demons in battle. He had everything in his life, but he did not have a heir for his kingdom. So, he performed a *Putra-Kameshthi Yagya* (a ritual performed with a desire for a son). After being pleased with this ritual, the God of Fire appeared from the Yagya and gave him *Kheer* (an Indian dessert containing rice or similar ingredients and sugar boiled in milk). King Dasaratha distributed the Kheer amongst his three wives. After this, all his three wives became pregnant and gave birth to children. **Rama** was born to queen *Kausalya* and was the eldest of all. **Sumitra** gave birth to **Lakshmana** and **Satrugna** and **Kaikeyi** gave birth to **Bharata**.

EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING OF LORD RAMA

Lord Rama and His brothers got their primary training in warfare and philosophy from *Sage Vasishtha*. When Rama was of age 16, Sage Vasishtha came to King Dasaratha and asked for help against the demons who were causing disturbances to sages while performing *Yagyas* (fire sacrifices). *Sage Viswamitra* chose Rama for his protection and took him with him. Lakshmana also accompanied Rama. Viswamitra gave them training in divine weapons. Rama and Lakshmana killed *Tratika* and many other demons and freed the ashram of Sage Viswamitra from the fear of demons. Then, Sage Viswamitra took Lord Rama and Lakshmana to *Mithila*, where *King Janaka* had arranged a *Swayamvaram* (a ceremony where a bride chooses the groom) for his daughter *Sita*. There was a condition in that *Swayamvara*, that the Kshatriya who would pick up and string the bow of *Lord Siva*, would be eligible to marry Sita. Many Kshatriya Kings and Princes tried their luck, but none of them could even lift the bow. Then after taking the permission from Sage Viswamitra, Rama picked up the bow of Lord Siva easily, but while trying to string it, it broke making a thunderous noise. *Lord Parasurama* came to know about this through His meditative powers and appeared there. He got very angry that somebody had broken the bow of Lord Siva, but soon He realized that Lord Rama was the incarnation of Lord Vishnu and He left the place after blessing the couple. The married couple returned to Ayodhya.

LORD RAMA, A DEVOTED SON

When King Dasaratha decided to crown Rama as his successor, every subject of the kingdom was happy with the news. However, a day before his crowning, *Kaikeyi* is brainwashed by her wicked maid *Manthara* regarding the insecurity of the future of her son, *Bhartha*. *Kaikeyi*, who was initially pleased for Rama, now gets highly jealous and asks King Dasaratha to fulfill her the two boons that were given to her by Dasaratha, after the birth of Rama



and other siblings. The first boon she asked was to send Rama away to banishment into the forest for fourteen years and the second was to crown *Bharatha* as the King of Ayodhya, in place of Rama. King Dasaratha was in a state of turmoil while at the same time he was known to be a king of his words. Rama, at once solves the crisis of His father, by willingly accepting the terms of the exile and also gives up His title without the blink of an eye, so that His father won't have to go back on his promise given to *Kaikeyi*. Rama then leaves for his exile, joined by His wife *Sita* and His brother *Lakshmana*. Dasaratha couldn't bear the grief after his son left and dies thereafter. Rama, even after His father's death decides not to return to Ayodhya till the completion of His term of exile as promised by Him to His father. Thus, we see the amount of dedication that He had to fulfill His promise that He gave His father, even after his death. Rama, therefore symbolizes the ideal devoted son, who can sacrifice anything for his parents. Rama's natural soul was that of an obedient son.

LORD RAMA, A LOVING BROTHER

In the entire story of *Ramayana*, one can see that Rama acted with responsibility, being an elder brother and also gave His brothers a lot of love and care. He treated *Lakshmana* as His equal and did not dominate him, just because He was elder to him. He was devastated when *Lakshmana* was seriously injured in the battle. He asked *Hanuman* to make all the efforts to make sure that *Lakshmana's* life is saved. The comradeship He shared with *Lakshmana* throughout the *Ramayana* is one that remains the strongest pillar of strong brotherhood in the history of ancient India. He was also never envious or even slightly jealous of any of His brothers' achievement or success. Even when His brother, *Bharatha* became King, He wasn't even slightly distressed about it. This is the reason all His brothers respected Him and looked up to Him as an awe-inspiring figure.

RAMA, A LOVING HUSBAND

Rama passed the test of Lord Siva and broke the arrow with ease to win over the eternally beautiful *Sita*. He respected *Sita's* choice to join Him in the forests, and gave Her equal authority and decision making power, though at the same time He was trying to dissuade *Sita* to join Him, as He did not want *Sita* to lead the life in the forest wrapped with difficulties and uncertainties at each step. He tried his best to insist Her to stay and not sacrifice Her comfortable life at the palace, but finally He respects *Sita's* decision, who supported her decision as to fulfill her duty to Him as his wife, thus proving that He did not dominate His wife and instead respected Her decision at all phases.

SPECIAL FEATURE

During their stay in the forests, Rama took great care of His wife, and gave her all the attention she deserved, and made efforts to fulfill her wishes. He even went to search for the golden deer that Sita wanted, even though He knew that it was a trap by Ravana and his fellow demons in action. After Rama gets to know that Sita is kidnapped by Ravana, we get to see the emotional side of Rama. He was overcome with emotions, and was deeply upset at the kidnapping of His wife. He then channelized these emotions to bring out His skills at being the perfect man. He showed strength of character and will power. He started gathering all the resources He could, and all the help that was



Dasaratha heartbroken.

needed to conquer the evil Ravana and rescue Sita from Lanka. He even helped Sugriva kill King Vali in exchange for his help to find Sita, as promised by Sugriva. This is how He gathered the army of monkeys, the **Vanarasenas**, ready to help Him. He was also helped by His greatest devotee, Hanuman, who was willing to go to all extents to find Sita. After gathering all His forces, when He reached Lanka, He successfully vanquished the evil Ravana.

LORD RAMA'S ABILITIES AS A KING AND WARRIOR

Rama was known to be a great warrior and a noble King. He was blessed with exceptional qualities and had mastery over scriptures, the Vedas and warfare. He was very clever and also possessed excellent administration skills. In the Great War against Ravana and his army, Rama killed some of the most powerful rakshasa warriors in Ravana's kingdom, including **Kumbakarna**, Ravana's brother. Along with thousands of rakshasa soldiers. In His final face off with Ravana, Ravana invoked all his magical powers, even His boons granted to Him by Brahma and Siva along with all the magical warfare possessed by the rakshasas. This battle between Rama and Ravana was one of the fiercest battles in the history of ancient Hindu mythology. They inflicted serious injuries on one another, as both possessed highly potent weapons, capable of destroying the entire universe. Finally, after a long and tiring battle, Rama decimated Ravana's central head, the source of all Ravana's powers. Rama proved that He was one of the most gifted warriors, as He was successful in defeating one of the strongest and most resourceful devils of all time, who had gained all his powers by his years of devotion and tapas to Lord Brahma.

RAMA'S ROLE IN HINDU EPICS AND FOLKLORES

While the Ramayana is the principal text that details Rama's life, He also appears in other Hindu scriptures. In Mahabharata, another major epic, Rama is mentioned as an exemplary figure, whose life served as a model for the **Pandavas**. The Puranas, a genre of ancient Indian literature, also contain numerous stories and references to Rama, further solidifying His importance in Hindu mythology. Beyond the Valmiki Ramayana, various regional adaptations and retelling of Rama's

story exist. In Tamil Nadu, Kamba Ramayanam, written by the great **Tamil poet, Kamban**, is a powerful version of the epic. In Southeast Asia, the **Ramakien in Thailand** and the **Hikayat Seri Rama in Malaysia** are notable adaptations. These versions often incorporate local cultural elements and variations in the narrative. Rama's influence extends to regional folklore and traditions. In Kerala, the festival of Onam celebrates the return of the legendary **King Mahabali**, with reference to Rama's virtues. In Karnataka, the **Pattabhisheka** (coronation) of Rama is re-enacted during the Mysore Dasara festival. These regional variations highlight the widespread cultural impact of Rama's story. Rama's story has inspired countless works of literature, art and performing arts. The Ramayana has been adapted into various regional languages and literary forms. In art, Rama is a popular subject in paintings, sculptures and temple carvings. The performing arts, including classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, often depict episodes from Ramayana.

DESCRIPTIONS & COMMON SYMBOLS ASSOCIATED WITH LORD RAMA

Rama is typically depicted as a handsome, dark-complexioned prince with a serene and composed demeanor. He is often shown holding a bow and arrow and accompanied by His wife Sita, His brother Lakshmana and His devoted devotee, Hanuman. The meaning and significance of the symbols associated with Rama:

* **Bow and Arrow:** Represent Rama's strength, valor and readiness to protect dharma

* **Lotus:** Symbolizes His purity and Divine Beauty and

* **Peacock Feather:** This symbolizes His connection to nature and beauty.



Sita pointing the Golden Deer to Rama.

CONCLUSION

Lord Rama, the ideal king and hero of the Ramayana, holds a central place in Hinduism and global culture. His life story, characterized by unwavering adherence to dharma, compassion and justice, serves as a timeless guide for righteous living. From His mythological origins to His modern-day relevance, Rama's influence permeates various aspects of religious practices, literature, art and popular culture. Rama's continued importance in Hinduism is evident in the numerous festivals, rituals and temples dedicated to Him. His story has inspired countless adaptations and retellings, reflecting its enduring appeal and significance. For followers, Rama represents the ultimate ideal of virtue and righteousness, offering a source of inspiration and guidance in their spiritual journey. The legacy of Lord Rama extends far beyond the boundaries of time and geography. His teachings, exemplified in the Ramayana, remain relevant and continue to guide individuals on the path of righteousness and devotion, even today.

TEMPLES FOR LORD RAMA

Besides the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya, there are over 100 temples dedicated to Lord Rama spread all over India. In just Tamil Nadu, there are close to 40 temples for Lord Rama. It is difficult to list or discuss about all the temples would have to



Rama fighting Ravana.

be a book by itself. But let us look at few temples of importance for specific reasons:

- **Sri Sita Ramachandraswamy Temple in Bhadrachalam in Telangana:** This Sri Rama temple has a direct connection to the epic Ramayana. The temple is associated with the legend of **Bhadra**, who became a human figure from stone form after the darshan of Sri Rama. The principal deity in the sanctum of the temple is Vaikuntha Rama. Sri Rama can be seen here with four arms. According to the legend, Lord Vishnu appeared as Rama in answer to Bhadra's prayers, but forgot that in His Rama avatar, he was a man, and appeared before Bhadra with four arms.
- **Sri Vijayaraghava Perumal Temple in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu:** The principal deity of this temple is Sri Vijayaraghava Perumal. This temple is associated with the legend of **Jatayu** in the Ramayana. According to the legend, the bird Jatayu breather his last, here after being injured in a dual with **Ravana**. Sri Rama gave salvation to the brave bird at this spot. In the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, one can see Sri Vijayaraghava with four arms, holding **Jatayu** and performing the last rites. Sridevi and Bhudevi can also be seen in the sanctum. This temple is also associated with **Sri Ramanujar**, as it is believed that his early education happened here.
- **Sri Kothandaramaswamy Temple in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu:** Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu is a very important location on the **Ramayana trail**. The **Ram Setu**, the bridge that was built across the ocean to Lanka by Sri Rama with help of the **Vanaras** is believed to have been located here, It is here that Sri Rama worshipped Lord Siva before and after his visit to Lanka. The presence of the Sri Ramanathaswamy temple, **one of the twelve Jyotirlingas**, adds to the sanctity of Rameswaram.
- **Sri Ramaswamy Temple in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu:** The Sri Ramaswamy Temple in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu is one of the famous Lord Rama temple in India. The temple was built during the 16th century by the **Thanjavur Nayak Kings**. It is believed that the idols in the sanctum were found hidden in a tank of a temple in Darasuram. Sri Rama and Sita in a seated posture can be seen in the sanctum of the temple. Images of **Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna** can be seen in a worshipping pose. One of the highlights of the temple is, that the 64 pillars in a hall near the Gopuram on which scenes from the Ramayana are beautifully depicted.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

LORD KRISHNA, 8th OF DASAVATARAMS OF VISHNU

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

INTRODUCTION

In Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna is one of the most revered deities, celebrated for His divine qualities, enchanting persona and profound teachings. He embodies love, compassion and joy, making Him a central figure in various texts and traditions. As the eighth Avatar of Lord Vishnu, Krishna's life and teachings have left an indelible mark on Hindu culture and spirituality. Krishna is often depicted as a divine cowherd, a role that highlights His connection to nature and the pastoral life of the people of Vrindavan.

THE PROPHECY OF KRISHNA'S BIRTH

The Avatar of Krishna is said to have taken place in *Dwapara Yuga*. The story of Krishna's birth is steeped in prophecy and divine intervention. According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, King Kamsa of Mathura was warned by a celestial voice, that he would be killed by the eighth son of his sister *Devaki*. In a bid to thwart this prophecy, Kamsa imprisoned *Devaki* and her husband, *Vasudeva* and killed their first six children. However, the seventh child, *Balarama*, was miraculously transferred to the womb of *Rohini*, while *Krishna* the eighth child, was born in the prison cell. To protect him, *Vasudeva* carried Krishna to *Gokul* and entrusted him to *Nanda* and *Yashoda*, ensuring that the prophecy would unfold.

KRISHNA:

THE PURNAVATARA OF VISHNU

The avatar of Krishna is considered a *Poornavatar*, an avatar in which all the sixteen Godly qualities or *16 Kalas* were found manifested in full, making Him the ultimate and ideal manifestation of Lord Vishnu. Each of the Kalas, teaches a lesson about living righteous, balanced and joyful life. So, He is a complete incarnation. He carries all divine attributes and powers in their greatest manifestation. Unlike Rama, a greatly revered avatar of the previous Yuga, Krishna was fully conscious of His divinity and He never tried to hide His divine powers. At every right and opportune occasions, Krishna demonstrated His divinely attributes and super-human powers. He used them to humble His opponents, destroy the evil doers and to instantly come to the rescue of His devotees in distress. The *sixteen Kalas* that Lord Krishna possessed making Him the *Poornavatar* are; 1. *Daya* (Compassion), 2. *Dharjya* (Patience), 3. *Kshama* (Forgiveness), 4. *Nyaya* (Justice), 5. *Nirapeksha* (Unbiased), 6. *Niraskata* (detachment), 7. *Tapaya* (Meditation and Spiritual Powers), 8. *Aparchitta* (Unshakable), 9. *Danasheel* (Giver of wealth), 10. *Saundaryamaya* (Attractive features and Beauty), 11. *Nrityajna* (Best of Dancers), 12. *Sangitajna* (Best of Singers), 13. *Neetibadi* (Manifestation of Honesty), 14. *Satyabadi* (Truth Itself), 15. *Sarvagnata* (Perfect Master of all arts, such as poetry, drama, painting etc.) and 16. *Sarvaniyanta* (Controller of All).

CHILD KRISHNA

BROUGHT UP AT GOKULA

The baby Lord Krishna grew up joyfully in the company of cow herds at *Gokula*. He was dark skinned and was the most beautiful and charming boy of the community. Whoever came across Him fell in instant love with Him. He was full of childhood pranks. He loved to steal butter and eat it in the company of fellow cowherd boys.



Baby Krishna taken away from prison by Vasudeva

He became the prince charming for all young girls and women folks (Gopis) of the community. Meanwhile, Kamsa sent several powerful demons in varying disguises to search for, locate and kill the boy, who escaped from the prison. Little Krishna encountered all of them (*Putana*, *Sakatasura*, *Bakasura*, *Trinavarta*, *Vatsasura*, *Aghasura* etc.) and killed them all as a matter of child play. Further, little Krishna killed a ferocious and poisonous *Snake Kaliya* who lived in the river Yamuna. He pulled the snake from the river and danced on its hood to the awe of one and all. When the celestial Lord Indra, created heavy rains at *Gokula* because a worship due to him was denied at the behest of Krishna, Krishna protected the entire community by lifting up the *hill Govardhan* by holding it like an umbrella at His little finger.

KRISHNA AND GOPIS

Right from His boyhood, Krishna started playing flute. His music was extremely captivating. Not only the human beings, but animals were also attracted by His flute. When Krishna was in his early teens, His attractions to the womenfolk of Gokula (Gopis) was divine. Their love towards Krishna was so intense that they even ignored their duty and allegiance to their husbands and went madly behind Krishna. Hindu spiritual masters interpret that this love of Gopis towards Him was never carnal, but it was the spiritual longing of the individual souls (jivatmas) towards the divine soul (*Paramatma*).

KRISHNA AND RADHA

It was during this phase that *Radha* (or Radhika) of Brindavan developed a deep-rooted love for Krishna. The divine love between Radha and Krishna (which never consummated in a marriage), though not found mentioned in *Srimad Bhagavata*, is dealt with elaborately in *Brahma Vaivartha Purana* and several folklore and Sanskrit literary works. Radha-Krishna love has always been a source of inspiration for the Bhakti movement of Vaishnavites of eastern India, as this love symbolically represents the longing for yoga (union) of the individual soul with the Supreme soul.

KRISHNA'S RETURN TO MATHURA

When Krishna became mature it was time for Him to go to Mathura and take the bull by its horns, i.e. to face His uncle Kamsa and destroy him for all his vengeful deeds. Krishna overcame several obstacles at Mathura and finally killed His uncle, Kamsa in a ferocious combat. He released His parents from the jail and re-throned *Ugrasena* as the King. Over a period of time, He got married to *Bhama* and *Rukmini*. The story goes that Krishna later got married to 6 more women. At later period of His life, He killed a demon king by name *Bhaumasura* and He had to marry 14,000 women who were earlier abducted by the demon king. This He did at the behest of the women, who would otherwise lose their honour in society for having been in the custody of the demon king.

SPECIAL FEATURE



Krishna lifting Govadhan Hill.

KRISHNA AND THE PANDAVAS

Meanwhile, His maternal cousins, the **Pandavas** (5 sons of **King Pandu** headed by **Yudhishtira**) of the **Kuru clan** at the kingdom of **Hastinapur** were facing lots of difficulty in claiming their rightful share to their kingdom. It was due to certain acts of omissions and commissions done by themselves as well as due to the vengeful and treacherous acts of their unrighteous cousins, the **Kauravas** headed by **Duryodhana** (who too claimed the throne of Hastinapur), that the peace-loving Pandavas were facing insurmountable difficulties in life.

Krishna developed a bosom friendship with **Arjuna** the most powerful archer and the younger brother of Yudhishtira. Whenever they found time, they spent time together and enjoyed the friendly company of each other. Arjuna fell in love with Krishna's sister Subhadra and Krishna arranged their marriage secretly against stiff resistance from His clan. The Pandavas were fairly knowledgeable of the divinely nature of Krishna. Pandavas surrendered to Krishna and sought His help and guidance in overcoming their problem, Krishna intervened frequently in the lives of Pandavas to protect them from innumerable personal problems. He also used His diplomatic skills and tried His best to bring in a truce between the Pandavas and the **Kouravas**. But Kouravas had neither respect for dharma nor for Krishna's counselling.

KURUKSHETRA WAR AND THE BIRTH OF BHAGAWAD GITA

Finally, a grand war erupted between Pandavas and Kouravas. Numerous kings of the entire subcontinent virtually side lined and supported either the Pandavas or the Kouravas according to their relationships and temperament and took



Krishna as Charioteer in Kurukshetra War.

part in the **Great Mahabharata War**. Dharma was obviously on the side of Pandavas. Krishna, as the King of Mathura and a blood relative of both Pandavas and Kouravas, offered His entire army to take part in the war on one side and He, Himself without taking-up arms on the other side. He left the choice to Arjuna (of the Pandavas) and Duryodhana (of Kouravas) to choose any one between the two. While Arjuna instantly and gladly opted to have Krishna on their side as non-fighting companion, Duryodhana was too happy to accept the huge and powerful army of Krishna. Krishna offered His services to be the charioteer of Arjuna during the war. Just before the beginning of the war at Kurukshetra, Arjuna became jittery. He felt it

was futile to wage war against his own blood relations and other seniors, respectable elders and teachers and masters in the other camp.

It was at this juncture, that **Lord Krishna** gave one of the greatest sermons to Arjuna, His utterances which form the **Holy Scripture, Bhagavat Gita**. In this great spiritual discourse, Lord Krishna predominantly teaches Karma Yoga, the path of attaining the greatest goal of life through self-less action by surrendering all the fruits of actions at the feet of the Lord. In Bhagavat Gita, Lord Krishna also elaborates the other spiritual paths – **Bhakti Yoga and Gnyana Yoga**. Krishna, as part of His efforts to teach Arjuna during His discourse, gave a divine vision to Arjuna and revealed His **Viswarupa** (His cosmic form that transcended the creation, births, deaths and time, space and causation) and Arjuna was overwhelmed with awe to see this form of the Supreme Lord Krishna. Krishna acted as a charioteer to Arjuna and saved his life under many tricky situations. In a couple of occasions, Krishna even used dubious means (that his enemies accused Him as acts of adharma) in order to tilt victory in favour of the righteous Pandavas. The war ended with the annihilation of the Kouravas and the rule of the Pandavas was established.

TIME-LINE OF LORD KRISHNA'S LIFE

- Birth Birth to Devaki at mid-night of Sravana, Rohini Star, Ashtami of Krishna Paksha (July 19/20), year 3228 BCE
- Till age 3 Lived in Gokula; Killed Putana, Sakatasura and Trinivarta demons
- Age 3-6 Moved to Vrindavan; killed Bakasura, Aghasura & Dhenuka; moved Nandagrama
- Age 7-10 Brahma steals and returns cowherd boys; Govardan Puja & lifted Mount Govardhana, Played Rasa-Lila with Gopis; Invited to Mathura for a Wrestling Match and killed Canura and Kamsa & Balarama killed Mustika and killed Kamsa's brothers.
- Age 10-28 Lived in Mathura; Initiated with in Chanting Gayatri by Gargamuni; Instructed With Balarama in the sixty-four arts by Sandipani Muni; Protects Mathura from Many demons.
- Age 29-83 Establishes a Kingdom in Dwaraka; Marriage to Rukmini and 7 others; Rescues 16,100 princesses from the kingdom of Narakasura.
- Age 84-125 Delivers Bhagavad Gita at Kurukshetra Battle (3138 BCE); Saves King Pariksit In the womb; instructs Uddhava Gita and
- At 125 Swargarohana – leaving the body on February 18, 3102 BCE

KEY TEACHINGS OF BHAGAVAT GITA

- **Karma Yoga (Path of Action):** Krishna advises Arjuna to perform his duty without attachment to the outcome. He explains that selfless action, done without desire for personal gain, leads to spiritual liberation. **“You have a right to perform your duty, but not to the fruits of the action”**. – **Bhagavad Gita 2.47**
- **Jnana Yoga (Path of Knowledge):** Krishna highlights the importance of acquiring spiritual knowledge to understand the nature of the self and the universe. He teaches that the soul is eternal, and liberation comes through the realization of one's true nature. **“The wise grieve neither for the living nor the dead”** – **Bhavat Gita 2.11**
- **Bhakti Yoga (Path of Devotion):** Krishna reveals that the easiest and most direct path to God is through devotion. He encourages surrender to the Divine, assuring Arjuna that those who devote themselves wholeheartedly to Him will attain liberation. **“Surrender unto me alone.**

I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear”. – **Bhagavat Gita 18.66**

PHILOSOPHICAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF LORD KRISHNA

Lord Krishna's teachings and actions hold immense philosophical depth. He is seen as the embodiment of **dharma** (righteousness), **karma** (action) and **bhakti** (devotion), making Him an all-encompassing guide for humanity.

• **Embodiment of Dharma:**

Throughout His life, Krishna exemplified the principles of **dharma**, guiding individuals and communities towards righteous living. His role as a mediator in the Mahabharata reflects His commitment to upholding justice and righteousness.

• **Divine Play (Lila):**

Krishna's life is often referred as Lila – divine play. His playful, mischievous actions during childhood, such as stealing butter or teasing the Gopis are seen as expressions of divine love and joy.

• **Krishna in Bhakti Tradition:**

Krishna has inspired many bhakti movements, particularly in North India. Saints like Meera Bai, Surdas and Vallabhacharya have composed countless hymns and songs dedicated to His love and compassion/ Krishna's life demonstrates the intimate connection between the devotee and the Divine.



Viswarupa Darsana of Lord Krishna.

THE END OF LORD KRISHNA

As Krishna advanced in age, the Yadava clan grew too arrogant, morally weak and got in the grip of vices. By an act of mischief, Krishna's descendants and their clan got a curse from sages that paved for their annihilation. Lots of bickering happened between the members of families and the ruling class and they grew out of control of Krishna's divine and moral influence. Time soon came, when they were destined to get wiped out entirely on account of verbal dual that started between two drunken relatives of Krishna. It grew into a bloody fight and Krishna took up the role of a destroyer now and He personally killed many Yadavas using pestles that grew out of wild grass near seashore. Krishna knew that it was time to draw curtains to His present Avatar. He retired to forest and was engaged in deep meditation. A hunter Jara, mistook Krishna's partly visible left foot for that of a deer, and shot an arrow, wounding Him mortally. While still bleeding, Lord Krishna told Jara, **“you were Vali in your previous birth, killed by myself as Rama in Tretayuga. Here you had a chance to even it and since all acts in this world are done by Me, you need not worry for this”**. Then Lord Krishna, with His physical body ascended back to His eternal abode, **Goloka Vrindavan** and this event marked the departure of Lord Krishna from the earth. Soon a great tsunami came and the surging waters submerged the entire city of Dwarak.



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