

Monsoon



Journal

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HUMANITY STILL EXISTS... ?

By Hariprasanth Sundareson (Hari)
(Gampola, Sri Lanka)

I live in Gampola, Saliyawaththa. When the recent Cyclone Ditwah hit Sri Lanka — and with it, Gampola, my entire area flooded. I never imagined the water would rise as high as it did... but it did. Within minutes, our whole house was filling up with water. At that moment, it was just me, my father, and the kid at home. They had fallen asleep, and around midnight I suddenly realized the water was entering the house.

I was completely shaken. I didn't know what to do. All I had in my mind was two things:

Save my father. Save the kid.

Everything else — property, belongings — became secondary.

I quickly woke my father up, carried the kid, and we slowly climbed onto the slab and then moved to the neighboring three-



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HUMANITY STILL EXISTS...?



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storey house. Five families had already taken shelter there. Along with them, we spent the entire night trying to stay safe.

They are the first people I'm deeply grateful for.

Both of them are elderly, both have gone through heart surgeries, yet in that difficult moment they helped us climb up, welcomed us into their home, sheltered all six families, and shared whatever food and water they had. Their kindness, even in their own struggle, is something I will never forget.

The next morning around 5.40 AM, the water level finally started to drop. But we still had no electricity, no water, and no signal. No telco had coverage. We had no way of knowing what was happening outside, and no way of telling anyone what was happening to us.

The whole village was underwater — only rooftops were visible. It kept raining nonstop. People were panicking, sharing different stories:

"They're going to open the dam again..."

"The water will rise more than yesterday..."

"There will be no way out of the village..."

I didn't know what was true. I could

only think about getting the kid to safety.

Once the water went down a little, I climbed down to the street and checked if any road was accessible. People said maybe one road was open. Nothing was certain. But the whole village had started to evacuate — by foot, no vehicles in sight.

I carried the kid on my shoulders, told my father we must leave now and worry about everything else later. Our only goal: reach a safe place.

We walked, and walked, and walked.

More than 8 kilometers, with the kid on my shoulders.

Even around half kilometer through water as high as my hips.

In rain and heavy wind.

Shivering, exhausted, unsure if any road would lead us to safety. Every direction people gave us seemed unreliable. All four main access roads were still flooded — more than 6 feet of water.

I was physically drained, mentally lost, but I kept moving because stopping was not an option.

And then... a three-wheeler appeared.

A young boy was driving it. He stopped

immediately when he saw us and asked, "Where are you heading?"

I told him we just needed to reach a safe place, somewhere dry. I asked if Mariyawaththa (where my brother lives) was safe He said it wasn't affected and told us to get in.

There were already 9 people inside. Somehow we squeezed in. Now 12 people were packed into a small three-wheeler.

This boy — a stranger — said, "Don't worry, I'll take you there," even though it wasn't the direction he was travelling.

The path was not even a proper road. The route was narrow, flooded, and dangerous. Yet he risked it and drove us all the way to my brother's place. Safely.

My phone was switched off, so I couldn't even take a photo of him. I don't know his name. But he became the second person I'm truly grateful for.

People like these remind us that humanity still exists.

Helping without expecting anything.

Caring for strangers.

Choosing kindness even in chaos.

Their generosity, courage, and humanity are priceless.

In moments like these, I feel proud to be a Sri Lankan.

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Rap, My Stress Buster

By Harrish Thirukumaran

Over the years, I have developed an interest in rapping and hip-hop culture. The sound, bravado, and lyricism have always fascinated me ever since I was a child. It is only more recently that I became inspired to perform my own rapping for myself. That has included writing lyrics and finding instrumentals to perform raps across. It is because it has served as an outlet for my own form of creative expression, helping me manage the stresses of daily life.

Rapping has been something that I hope to cultivate as a pastime to relieve the stress of daily life. It speaks to music as a form of stress relief, which I spoke to in an earlier issue of the Monsoon that others can benefit from.

Something that attracted me to rap has been the storytelling and lyricism that spins tales of personal, emotional experiences of its artists. It, at the same time, offers a vision for the ways things ought to be or delivering a higher sense of motivation for both the performer and the listener. These lyrics, also colloquially known as bars, are structured in a way where the performer speaks in a rhythmic manner that describe feelings and experiences. They are often written in a 4/4 time signature where they are usually counted in four.

As someone who has a fondness for rap and hip hop, it caused me to dive deeper in the way hip hop supports mental wellbeing through research. Hip hop and rap have had a global impact in the world for many listeners including myself. Based on research, hip hop originated in the South Bronx in New York in the 1970s by African American and Latino communities in response to industrial environmental stressors of social injustice, it served to bring people together in protest. In terms of motivation, songs about overcoming adversity and achieving success have been documented to serve as a motivation to boost confidence and drive. It helps individuals have the capacity to manage their own life circumstances. This could not be truer. One song that comes to mind in that regard is "Lose Yourself" by Eminem. Accordingly, rap does provide a platform for communicating difficult feelings, experiences, and social injustices that could otherwise remain unsaid.

Indeed, it has helped me get through tough times in my life especially more recently like the loss of my parents and having to take on new responsibilities and challenges in the wake of their passing. Raps that are more introspective in nature resonate with me particularly. They convey how other artists manage complex emotions that accompany various life events. Listening to the life experiences of some of my favorite musicians including J Cole and Kendrick Lamar have always given me goosebumps. They feel like powerful expressions of the humanness in a society.

This style of rap inspired me earlier on in the year to write raps about my own life and personal experiences as way to heal myself and process my emotions in a fun, creative way. To further hone my own skill, I ended up taking a course on hip hop and rap on Udemy. Learning fundamentals like rhyme schemes, slant rhyming, counting syllables, and so forth helped to improve myself in rap. I often use the notes app on my phone to write down bars that I come up with that

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I connect with. In a way, creating my own rap music has made life more enjoyable even as I was having to manage the various stresses with it.

Sometimes my raps were not perfect. It did seem frustrating and awkward at times to land some raps. Yet it's the courage and the effort that matters as well as the process of honing the craft that makes the journey worthwhile. Eventually, I was able to gain clarity on finding my voice in this genre of music and make it my own. There are times where to practice I would read things for work or leisurely by rapping it to the sound of a beat to help develop my flow, delivery, and cadence with it.

Although I have not recently practiced rapping in the last few months due to other priorities, the chance to reflect on it like this does inspire me to get back into it and further improve myself. There have been many intangible benefits for my own mental health in terms of stress relief. My own personal journey in rap is something that I hope to carry onto in 2026 to help succeed in my own endeavours. I hope it or some other outlet of creative expression could do just the same for others who may be going through their own forms of struggle. I encourage you to look deeply within for your sense of creativity and let it shine to assist you in leading a more enjoyable life.

SCARBOROUGH BUSWAY TO BE COMPLETED IN SEPTEMBER 2026

Scarborough transit riders will be getting a dedicated bus corridor in 2026. Today, Dec. 12, Mayor Olivia Chow, TTC Chair Jamal Myers and TTC CEO Mandeep S. Lali announced that construction of the Scarborough Busway will be accelerated, with service now scheduled to begin by the end of September 2026.

The project, originally slated for completion in 2027, will provide Scarborough residents with faster, more reliable transit options during the ongoing subway extension work.

“The people of Scarborough deserve reliable and efficient transit options,” said Mayor Olivia Chow. “I want to thank the TTC for recognizing the need to accelerate this project. Thousands of Scarborough commuters will soon have a dedicated busway, ensuring faster and more reliable travel times while we wait for the Scarborough subway to open.”

“Transit riders in Scarborough rely on our system every single day, and they deserve service that keeps up with their lives,” said TTC Chair Jamaal Myers. “As both TTC Chair and a Scarborough Councillor, I knew we needed to move faster — and that’s exactly what we’re doing. Accelerating the Scarborough Busway will provide a smoother, more dependable trip for thousands of people while we continue building the subway extension. This is a fundamental step toward delivering the high-



quality transit service Scarborough has been promised for years.”

“The TTC is committed to providing safer, faster, reliable and accessible transit service for all our customers, and accelerating the construction of this busway is one way that we can do just that for Scarborough residents,” said TTC CEO Mandeep S. Lali. “We are working together with our contractors to complete this project as quickly as possible, and we are grateful for the support from the Mayor, the City and surrounding communities.”

Since November 2023, the TTC has been operating an interim bus replacement service with full transit priority measures, following the closure of the Line 3 Scarborough RT.

The Scarborough busway will operate along a 4-kilometre area of former Line 3 right-of-way, following the same general route as the former Line 3 SRT. It will begin at Kennedy Station, stopping at Tara Ave./Mooregate Ave., Lawrence East Station, and Ellesmere Station. Buses will then use Ellesmere Rd.’s priority bus infrastructure to connect to Scarborough Town Centre. When the busway is implemented, a trip between Scarborough Centre Station and Kennedy Station is projected to take approximately 15 minutes.

Additional information can be found at <https://www.ttc.ca/about-the-ttc/projects-and-plans/Future-of-Line-3-Scarborough>.

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CAN INDIAN TAMIL CINEMA

STAR VIJAY BECOME CHIEF MINISTER IN TAMIL NADU ?

The buzz around Tamil cinema icon Thalapathy Vijay entering politics is no longer confined to fan circles — it has become a significant talking point in political discussions across Tamil Nadu. With the next Assembly elections scheduled for 2026, Vijay's nascent political party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), has staked its claim on transformational politics, with Vijay formally announced as its Chief Ministerial candidate.

But can Vijay actually become the Chief Minister? Answering that requires unpacking layers of political history, electoral strategy, public perception, and the entrenched dynamics of Tamil Nadu politics.

1. A Filmstar Turning Political Aspirant: Context and Legacy

Tamil Nadu has a long tradition of film stars transitioning into politics. Leaders like M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) and J. Jayalalithaa successfully parlayed cinematic mass appeal into political power, becoming two of the state's most influential chief ministers. Their success was grounded not just in fandom but in sustained political engagement

and organizational depth.

Vijay's entry follows this familiar pattern: a charismatic cinema figure leveraging his massive fanbase for political outreach. However, unlike MGR and Jayalalithaa — who began deep political immersion early — Vijay's political career is still in its infancy. He launched his party only in 2024 and declared his chief ministerial candidacy in 2025.

2. The Promise and Limitations of Star Power

Vijay's fan following is indisputably immense, cutting across age and region within Tamil Nadu. His rallies — often drawing massive crowds — signal enthusiasm beyond just entertainment. Yet, converting fan adulation into votes and votes into legislative seats is a different challenge altogether.

Political analysts and observers have pointed out that mass appeal does not automatically translate into political gains. While crowds at rallies may indicate excitement, sustained electoral support requires policy clarity, grassroots mobilization, and organizational strength — areas where TVK is still evolving. Furthermore, there is public

skepticism about whether cinematic image and political substance can align. Critics argue that Vijay's political messaging has often leaned on bold declarations rather than detailed policy frameworks, a vulnerability that seasoned political rivals can exploit.

3. Standing Up Against the Political Establishment

Vijay's campaign strategy is clear: his party positions itself as an alternative to the established Dravidian parties (DMK and AIADMK) and resists alliances with national parties like the BJP. He has publicly articulated this independent stance, aiming to attract voters disenchanted with traditional political narratives.

At a recent Christmas event, Vijay reiterated TVK's commitment to secularism and religious harmony — a move seemingly designed to broaden his appeal across diverse communities.

However, opponents remain vocal. Senior politicians have dismissed his ambitions as unrealistic, suggesting that the chief ministerial dream may exist more comfortably in cinematic narratives than in realpolitik.

Op-Ed

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One state minister retorted that Vijay's aspiration was "only feasible in films," reflecting the impatience establishment politicians feel toward his rapid rise.

4. Strategic Pitfalls and Organizational Challenges

To win the Chief Minister's chair, Vijay must not only secure a plurality of seats in the Assembly but also build a cohesive legislative group. That requires:

- Strong party organization across districts

- Effective cadre mobilization beyond his fanbase

- A clear policy platform addressing education, employment, social justice, and governance

Vijay's party remains young, and political commentators suggest it lacks the deep grassroots networks enjoyed by DMK and AIADMK. This gap could limit TVK's ability to deliver results on election day unless rapidly strengthened.

Additionally, throwing out alliances with dominant parties might be a double-edged sword. While it maintains TVK's independence, it also isolates the party in a crowded electoral landscape where coalitions often determine governance outcomes.

5. Voter Sentiment and Realpolitik



- tamilguardian.com

Public opinion on Vijay's political viability is mixed. While many fans are enthusiastic and hopeful, broader voter blocs — especially rural and caste-based constituencies that often decide Tamil Nadu elections — remain cautious. Some see Vijay as a welcome fresh voice; others worry his political footprint is too shallow for governance.

Political analysts emphasize that true electoral success demands years of visible engagement with public issues,

not merely charismatic speeches. Unlike routine celebrity appearances, realpolitik demands accountability, strategy, and trust — elements that are still in development for TVK.

Conclusion: A Long Shot or a Political Breakthrough?

In a state where the political landscape has been dominated by Dravidian powerhouses for decades, Vijay's bid to become chief minister is extraordinarily ambitious. His star power offers him a platform few newcomers can dream of, yet popularity alone cannot replace political experience, grassroots networks, and robust policy platforms.

For Vijay to make a credible bid for the chief ministership, the coming months are crucial: he must build organizational strength, articulate clear alternatives to existing governance models, and expand his appeal beyond loyal fans to encompass a broad cross-section of Tamil Nadu voters.

If he succeeds, Vijay could reshape the state's political narrative. If he falters, his party's brief surge might be remembered as another chapter in Tamil Nadu's long saga of cinema meeting politics



Villupuram: Actor and founder of TVK, Vijay waves at supporters during his first political conference, at Vikravandi. Photo Credit: PTI



ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE **DITWAH** CYCLONE DISASTER IN SRI LANKA



Image: AFP

By: Visvalingam Muralithas

December traditionally marks Sri Lanka's peak tourism season, driven largely by holiday travel from Europe and other regions that observe long Christmas and New Year vacations. Airlines and Sri Lanka-bound flights are typically fully booked during this period, with airfare prices rising sharply due to high demand. This seasonal boom is a vital source of foreign exchange. In 2023, tourism generated USD 2.659 billion; in 2024, earnings increased to USD 3.17 billion; and in the first ten months of 2025, Sri Lanka recorded USD 2.659 billion in tourism revenue. Estate sector or hill country also effected seriously in the estate sector and infrastructures. It will effect tea and other agricultural exports revenue in Sri Lanka. According to the data, total tea export revenue in 2024 and 2025 January to October were 1.43 billion USD, and 1.29 Billion USD.

However, the Ditwah disaster has struck at the worst possible moment. The destruction across multiple districts has severely dampened tourist arrivals, threatening immediate revenue losses and long-term reputational damage. Just as Sri Lanka began rebuilding after the 2022 economic collapse, the new disaster risks reversing the fragile recovery of the external sector and foreign reserves.

Sri Lanka's recent history is defined by a relentless sequence of crises — from the 1959 cyclone and the 2004 tsunami to the Easter Sunday attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2022 economic collapse. Each of these shocks eroded institutional resilience, strained the national economy, and exposed long-standing structural weaknesses. The Ditwah disaster, affecting Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, the central highlands, the Vanni region, the Eastern Province and several other areas, has now struck at a particularly fragile moment when the country is striving for macroeconomic stability. This unfolding humanitarian and development challenge underscores the urgent need for a long-term, multi-sectoral national resilience strategy.

Economic Impact

The disaster has inflicted severe damage on the agricultural sector, particularly the upcountry—Sri Lanka's primary supplier of vegetables such as carrots, leeks, beans, potatoes, and leafy greens. Entire cultivation areas have been destroyed. The poultry sector has suffered significant losses, reducing the supply of chicken and eggs, while the dairy industry faces disruptions in milk collection and distribution.

Damage to major irrigation systems, including the Mavilaru and Kaddukkarai tank networks, will have long-term repercussions for food production. Paddy-producing regions in the Vanni districts and Eastern Province have been inundated, reducing the national paddy supply and increasing the likelihood of higher-priced rice imports. This will further strain foreign reserves at a time of acute external vulnerability.

The Ditwah disaster has caused a severe breakdown in Sri Lanka's supply chain and transport infrastructure. Road networks connecting the central highlands to Colombo and other economic hubs have been heavily damaged by landslides, while railway lines—some over a century old—have been submerged, twisted, or destroyed. The railway system, a vital artery for upcountry vegetable transportation, the highland tea industry, estate labour mobility, and daily commuter travel, has effectively shut down, disrupting trade flows nationwide. This paralysis has intensified market volatility and pushed prices upward across urban centres, amplifying the economic consequences of the disaster.

The upcountry region, a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's export economy, has suffered

Op-Ed

extensive destruction. Tea plantations, spice crops such as cardamom, pepper, and cinnamon, floriculture nurseries, and processing factories have all been damaged or rendered inaccessible. Estate workers have been displaced, and each day of lost production further reduces export earnings, deepening the foreign exchange deficit and undermining external sector recovery. To stabilise domestic food availability, the government will be forced to increase imports of rice, vegetables, dairy products, and poultry, which will widen the balance-of-payments deficit and heighten the nation's reliance on external borrowing—a serious macroeconomic risk for a country still recovering from sovereign default.

The human and social toll has been equally severe, particularly in the hill country where estate communities—historically among the most marginalised groups—have borne the brunt of the disaster. Many have lost homes, daily income, personal assets, and access to basic services such as electricity, communication, healthcare, and food. Schools, clinics, and places of worship have been damaged or destroyed, while washed-out bridges isolate villages, delaying rescue and relief operations. Communication networks have collapsed, impeding emergency warnings, banking, market coordination, and government response. Although the government has declared a national emergency, its capacity to respond is constrained by fiscal limitations, damaged transport networks, shortages of emergency supplies, and delays in restoring communication—revealing structural governance weaknesses that were also exposed during the 2022 crisis.

Lesson for Sri Lanka: Strengthening Agricultural Resilience Through Long-Term Planning

In 2025, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India had achieved a historic milestone by producing 357 million tonnes of food grains—the highest in the country's history. This achievement was not accidental; it is the result of years of strategic planning, investment in climate-resilient agriculture, improved irrigation systems, modern technology adoption, and strong institutional coordination.

For Sri Lanka, now grappling with the devastating effects of the Ditwah cyclone disaster, India's experience offers an important lesson: long-term agricultural resilience must be built before crises strike. By strengthening irrigation networks, investing in climate-smart crop varieties, expanding storage facilities, improving farmer extension

services, and ensuring continuous government support, Sri Lanka can protect its food security, reduce disaster-related losses, and stabilise the economy in the aftermath of future climate shocks.

International Assistance

India and several partner countries have provided essential support, including medical teams, relief supplies, communication repair units, and engineering assistance. This international cooperation has been crucial in stabilising the humanitarian situation and enabling faster recovery.

Governance Failures

Beyond the scale of the natural disaster, deep-rooted governance weaknesses have significantly amplified the destruction. Allegations have surfaced regarding the failure of local government institutions to maintain critical infrastructure. Although annual funds are allocated for drainage upgrades, routine cleaning, and flood-mitigation systems, many local authorities have reportedly failed to utilise these resources effectively. In some cases, allocated budgets were even returned unspent to the central government, highlighting administrative delays, weak planning, and poor prioritisation at the local level.

Neglected maintenance has left many drainage networks clogged, silted, and dysfunctional. Blocked canals, uncleared stormwater drains, and poor waste-management practices caused rainwater to accumulate rapidly, turning manageable rainfall into destructive floods. These issues have been further exacerbated by widespread illegal construction on wetlands, canals, and river reservations, obstructing natural waterways and reducing the land's ability to absorb excess rainwater. Together, these failures expose a deeper governance problem—one in which responsibility is widespread, but accountability remains weak, leaving local councils as critical points of vulnerability in Sri Lanka's disaster-management framework.

Key Policy Priorities

To strengthen Sri Lanka's ability to withstand future disasters, policymakers must adopt a multi-pronged approach. Climate-resilient agriculture should be prioritised by rebuilding damaged irrigation systems, promoting flood- and drought-tolerant crops, and expanding crop insurance schemes to safeguard rural livelihoods. Modernising transport and infrastructure is equally critical, including reinforcing railway lines, constructing landslide-resistant roads, and upgrading bridges to ensure connectivity during extreme weather events. Enhancing social protection

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through targeted cash transfers, housing reconstruction programs, and comprehensive healthcare—including mental health support—will help vulnerable communities recover faster. Finally, reforming disaster governance by improving coordination between central and local authorities, decentralising emergency communication systems, and ensuring transparent management of relief funds will strengthen overall preparedness and responsiveness for future crises.

Conclusion

The Ditwah disaster is more than a natural calamity—it represents a decisive turning point for Sri Lanka's economic and social landscape. The collapse of agriculture, disruption of exports, rising food prices, and increased foreign currency pressures risk pushing the country back toward instability. Yet, this crisis also presents an opportunity: to rebuild smarter, strengthen resilience, and reform the systems that failed.

With effective leadership, strategic planning, and continued international support, Sri Lanka can emerge stronger—and better equipped to withstand future shocks.

Writer

Visvalingam Muralithas is a researcher in the legislative sector, specializing in policy analysis and economic research. He is currently pursuing a PhD in

Economics at the University of Colombo, with a research focus on governance, development, and sustainable growth. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics (Honours) from the University of Jaffna and a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Colombo. His academic background is further strengthened by postgraduate diplomas in Education from the Open University of Sri Lanka and in Monitoring and Evaluation from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. In addition to his research work, Muralithas has contributed to academia by teaching economics at the University of Colombo and the Institute of Bankers of Sri Lanka (IBSL), and has also gained industry experience as an investment advisor at a stock brokerage firm affiliated with the Colombo Stock Exchange. He can be reached at muralithas.v@gmail.com



CANADA PROVIDES HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN RESPONSE TO CYCLONE IN SRI LANKA



Cyclone Ditwah has caused unimaginable loss, leaving many families and communities in Sri Lanka facing devastation and uncertainty. Canada stands with those impacted and will continue to provide humanitarian aid and support to help communities recover and rebuild.

On Dec 16, 2025, the Honourable Randeep Sarai, Secretary of State for International Development, announced more than \$2 million in funding for humanitarian assistance to support emergency relief efforts in Sri Lanka. The funding is allocated as follows:

- **\$1.4 million to the World Food Programme (WFP)** to provide immediate access to food for affected households.

- **\$350,000 to World Vision Canada**, a member of the Humanitarian Coalition, to provide relief items and emergency shelters, along with water, sanitation and hygiene services, through the Canadian Humanitarian Assistance Fund.

- **\$215,000 to support the Sri Lanka Red Cross's** ongoing relief operations through the Emergency Disaster Assistance Fund, which is administered by the Canadian Red Cross.

- **Nearly \$70,000 provided through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives** to deliver emergency relief.

Canada continues to monitor the situation and remains in close contact with experienced partners to assess and respond to evolving needs.

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FEFE DOBSON'S ROOTS AND RHYTHM ARE SCARBOROUGH



Fefe Dobson Scarborough-Born Singer

Born at SHN and shaped by Scarborough, Fefe Dobson shares how her hometown inspires her music, identity, and advocacy.

I was born at Scarborough General Hospital on February 28, 1985, at 3:33 PM, and I even had my tonsils taken out there when I was young. My roots in Scarborough run deep, from the neighbourhood of Morningside to the community centre at Willcox Creek.

Growing up, my mom was a single mother, raising us through places like Galloway and Kingston Road. Music was everywhere in our house. My mom played vinyl records of Lionel Richie, Phil Collins, and Bob Marley, while my sister would play Guns N' Roses and Nirvana. That mix of soul, reggae, and rock made me love music in all its forms. Seeing Axl Rose and Slash perform with so much style and energy inspired me to find my own voice and path in life.

Growing up in Scarborough taught

me the importance of community and support. Mental health has always been close to my heart because of my family. My mom sometimes felt afraid to go to the hospital, worried she wouldn't be understood or supported. If we had stronger healthcare funding and resources, things might have been different. It's amazing to see campaigns like Love, Scarborough supporting projects like the new SHN Community Mental Health Centre that just opened up.

I recently starred in the film *Morningside*, which was set in Scarborough and felt incredibly personal. Ron Dias, the director and a dear friend who also grew up in Scarborough, asked me to be part of it. The story is honest and raw, celebrating the beauty and the challenges of growing up here. For me, the film became a love letter to Scarborough — to its families, its grit, and the moments that shape us. It reminded me that every snowflake

is unique, just like every person from this community, and that our stories deserve to be told.

When I go home now, with my dogs and my cat, I sit back and reflect on my journey. Scarborough is always with me, it's in my music, my memories, and my sense of who I am. My advice to anyone in Scarborough trying to find their voice would be yourself, be authentic, and find a community that supports you. Scarborough gave me that foundation.

Love, Scarborough means family to me. It means my brothers and sister, my mom. It means the block parties, the neighbours, the shared experiences. I still smile remembering dancing the Macarena in Willcox Creek at a community centre block party. Those small moments stay with you.

"Scarborough is always with me, it's in my music, my memories, and my sense of who I am."



“WE GOT ROBBED OF HIS CHILDHOOD”: A NURSE’S STORY OF HER SON’S LEUKEMIA

A nurse shares her family’s journey through childhood leukemia and the impact of SHN care

Rishan, an ER nurse, navigates her son MJ’s leukemia journey with courage, hope, and gratitude for SHN care.

For 20 years, Rishan comforted frightened parents as an emergency room nurse. But last year, she became one herself. Her six-year-old son, MJ, began showing subtle symptoms—untouched lunches, leg pain, and occasional palpitations—that ultimately led to a devastating diagnosis: childhood leukemia.

“Cancer stole more than just time—it stole pieces of MJ’s childhood,” Rishan said. “He had to give up soccer, swimming, summer camp—everything that made him feel like a normal kid was replaced by IV poles and hospital walls. Nights that should’ve been filled with bedtime stories were spent under fluorescent lights, listening to nurses adjust his chemo meds. I’ll never forget pacing those halls one evening, phone in hand, trying to call his soccer coach. It was our week to bring snacks for the team, and I just froze—I couldn’t find the words to say why we wouldn’t be there. And then there was his hair—so long, full and beautiful. Losing it wasn’t just about looks; it was one more thing cancer stole. I never got to take him for his first haircut.”

At first, it was easy to dismiss the warning signs. “I made excuses for his symptoms,” she said. “He would ask me to carry him up the stairs and I was like, ‘Okay, whatever, he likes being carried.’” His picky eating worsened, then came persistent leg pains she chalked up to soccer and growing pains. But when MJ’s pajama pants started slipping off his tiny frame, she knew something was truly wrong.

The early months of treatment were gruelling. “We were admitted basically every month for six months,” Rishan recalled. “He was getting poked and prodded constantly. Sometimes the



treatments lasted a week or two. He was just over it.”

Through it all, the care at SHN’s Centenary Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario (POGO) clinic made a lasting impact. “They’re so kind, so attentive, and always available,” she said. “They know their stuff. They’re patient—like MJ, the steroids make him super grumpy—and they would see him and treat him kindly even on his worst days.”



Rishan’s gratitude extends to the donors who make this care possible. “As both an SHN nurse and a parent of a patient, I know how much donor support makes a difference—for kids like my son, and for

the countless young patients I have seen come through our emergency rooms.”

Her message to other parents is simple but powerful: “If you notice something that’s off, take that first step and get it checked out. Knowledge is power. Even if it’s nothing, it’s better to know than to wait.”

The family now splits time between SHN for blood transfusions and SickKids for chemotherapy. His treatment will continue until October 10, 2028, when the family hopes to celebrate him being cancer-free.

His journey is a testament not only to resilience and hope, but to the extraordinary care at SHN’s Centenary Hospital—a place where medical expertise, compassion, and donor support come together to make life-saving care possible.

“I hope my story helps even one family act sooner,” Rishan said. “And if it inspires someone to make a gift in support of SHN, it will mean even more.

“Cancer stole more than just time—it stole pieces of MJ’s childhood.”

- Rishan Weldegebriel,
emergency Nurse, SHN



AFTER FIVE SURGERIES SHARON GREEN SUPPORTS SHN'S FUTURE THROUGH HER WILL

SUPPORTING SHN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



After five surgeries and a lifetime of care at Scarborough hospitals, Sharon Green decided to give back in a lasting way — by leaving a gift in her Will to SHN Foundation.

“I’ve had five surgeries at Scarborough General Hospital,” says Sharon Green. “Everything from a hysterectomy to two-foot surgeries, and through it all, the care has been wonderful. The staff are always kind, compassionate, and professional.” Sharon has lived in Scarborough for most of her adult life, and her connection to local healthcare goes even further: her daughter was born at Centenary Hospital, and over the years she has come to rely on SHN for world-class care.

That care inspired Sharon to give back in every way she could. Not only is she a patient, but she’s also a dedicated monthly donor, a frequent visitor to the hospital gift shop, and now, a legacy donor who has included Scarborough Health Network (SHN) Foundation in her Will.

“When I found out years ago that hospitals have to buy their own equipment, I couldn’t believe it,” she recalls. “I thought the government provided everything. That’s when I realized how important it is for the community to step up and support our hospitals.”

With no grandchildren of her own, Sharon decided to leave a lasting legacy to ensure that SHN can continue caring for future generations. “It’s not just for me,” she says. “It’s to keep the hospitals going. If a person can afford it, money is the easiest thing to give – and it truly makes a difference.”

Earlier this year, when the Ontario government mailed \$200 cost-of-living rebate cheques to residents, Sharon didn’t hesitate to donate hers back to SHN. “I knew it would be put to good use,” she says simply.

This November 2025, as we mark Make a Will Month, Sharon’s story is a powerful reminder that legacy giving can shape the future of healthcare in Scarborough. Every gift – no matter the size – helps ensure that SHN continues providing compassionate, world-class care for generations to come.

“It’s to keep the hospitals going. If a person can afford it, money is the easiest thing to give – and it truly makes a difference.”

-Sharon Green,
Patient & Legacy Donor



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AGE OF THE AIRCRAFT AND AIR SAFETY

By: Kane Siva

Aloha Airlines Flight 243

Airline crash



The recent UPS, MD-11 aircraft crash at Louisville Kentucky rattled everyone's mind and soul the way the left engine flew off on take-off. Ups flight 2976, 4th November 2025, not even 30 feet above ground crashed horrifically and exploded into a fireball, killing all 3 crew members and another 11 people and traumatizing many. When the news of the crash flashed globally, it was mentioned that the aircraft was more than 30 years old and was on the 3rd flight for the day. The immediate reaction doubtlessly in my mind and in many others was the aircraft's age. May be a thought that would have travelled so fast.

Does the age of the aircraft play any role in the safety of the aircraft? Any aviation pundit will brush off this idea, and the experts will say age doesn't affect, and this seems fair. What affects is how well the aircraft is maintained and its maintenance history. Aircraft age alone does not dictate the safety of the aircraft. There are certain other factors that determine the safety especially the maintenance, keeping the history of the aircraft, the overall experience of the pilots and also on a particular aircraft, whether the airline or the Aviation, and the experts concur that these are the most critical factors that determine the safety of the aircraft, and not the age. Also, the proper audit by the independent authorities like the FAA or CAA before the aircraft is certified as airworthy. On the contrary there is a strong thinking that well maintained older aircraft can be safe as the new ones. They have to go through rigorous and continuous inspections to make sure that they are safe to fly owners of the aircraft adhere to the aviation regulatory procedures, like FAA or Civil. There is a catalogue of must follow schedules that has been formulated by CAA or FAA in their respective countries and the agency

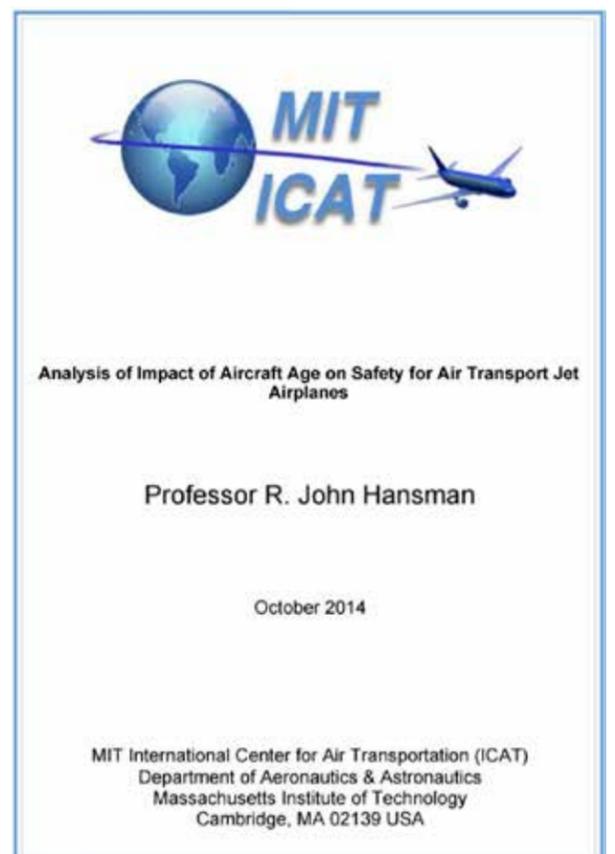
expects the operators to fulfil or comply with this stipulated requirement Starting with regular inspections, focussing on aircraft history, and addressing the wear & tear. These are mandatory requirements for aircraft that are used in either passenger or cargo operations, and for that matter if you want to have an aircraft up in the air.

Now let us explore how many older aircraft are still flying high and doing tremendous service. Douglas commercial aircraft, DC -3 started production in 1935, you can call it the most successful "Work Horse" of the aviation industry. There are almost 150 old DC-3 still flying, not in regular passenger operation but operating occasional charter flights, an incredible feat and I hardly remember any of these aircraft in unfortunate incidents. On a personal note, my first ever flight in a commercial aircraft was in a DC-3, on August 25th 1972, Air Ceylon flight, Ratmalana to Jaffna, Never Forget this momentous day. DC-3s are known as the aircraft that changed the world. The other aircraft worth mentioning is the Boeing 747, more than 55 years and still flying in good health with some carriers. The key here is the meticulous maintenance work and how periodically every component of the aircraft is assessed for its well being. Donald. J. Porter, an aerospace engineer, in his book "Flight Failures", clearly stress the need for proper aircraft maintenance, keeping all the maintenance records and the importance of regular periodic inspections of every inch of an aircraft, further he clearly states how some airlines fudge the maintenance records which I would consider as a criminal act. Porter focussed on maintenance errors, which rank as one of the top three causes of airline accidents. The UPS MD-11 crash opened a Pandora box for discussion, some may be palatable & some unpalatable.

Professor R. John Hansman is the T. Wilson Aeronautics & Astronautics, MIT, Boston, a well -recognized academic researcher, has more than 6000 hours of flying in command of various flying machines, holds 6 Patents, and published more than 250 publications, did extensive

research on air safety & the age of the aircraft. In 2014 he published a brilliantly and meticulously researched paper on this subject and was well accepted in the aviation industry. His paper "Analysis of Impact of Aircraft Age on Safety for Air Transport Jet Airplanes" and I am sharing excerpts from his publication. A historical analysis was conducted of aircraft accidents occurring between 1959 and 2012 for commercial jet aircraft transport with a MTOW, Maximum Take-off Weight, greater than 60,000 lbs, where aircraft age and operational histories were available. The analysis indicated that there was no correlation between the fatal accident rates and aircraft age up to 27 years. Above this age there was a slight increase in the fatal accidents rate. In 2014 the average of the aircraft was 10 to 12 years. I believe this age level holds good still except for a few carriers whose fleet age is less than 10 years. But with the substantial increase in the size of the fleet, the fleet's age has increased to 20 years in most airlines.

Another safety concern in ageing jet aircraft cropped up due to corrosion, fatigue or Widespread Fatigue Damage, WFD, this concern increased following the dramatic in-flight explosive decompression of Aloha Airlines Flight 243 in 1988. The pressurization vessel of the 19-year-old heavily used Boeing 737-29, was compromised and one cabin attendant was sucked out, and her body was never found. However, the



aircraft managed to land because of the heroic efforts of Captain Robert "BOB" Schornstheimer and co-pilot Madeline



Aviation & Airlines

SPECIAL FEATURE



Tompkins. The investigators realized that this aircraft had 35,486 hours of flight time and 89,680 flight cycles at the time of the incident or accident. Following this horrific accident strict measures were taken to monitor and assure airworthiness of older aircraft. The FAA created The Airworthiness Assurance Working Group, AAWG, which consists of international manufacturers, operators, maintenance organizations and regulatory groups, was formed to find ways to address ageing, corrosion and WFD. It is interesting to learn from this research by Hansman that on July 17, 1996, A TWA flight 800, a B-747 aircraft which was 25 years old, broke up in-flight over the Atlantic Ocean and crashed about 8 miles off Long Island, New York, Killing all 230 on board. According to NTSB, The National Transportation Board, the accident was caused by a short circuit due to age-old wiring in the fuel quantity indication system, FQIS, that enters the fuel tank. This prompted the FAA to expand its Ageing Aircraft Program, and this focused-on structure, to cover non-structural programs, wiring systems, mechanical and avionics systems. Hansman analyzed whether the chronological age of the aircraft or operational exposure (Flight cycles or flight hours) were the factors which created age related risks such as corrosion or Widespread Fatigue Damage for the aircraft. The AAWG and the FAA ultimately concluded that chronological age was a better indicator of environmental damage, while the operational exposure was a better indicator of fatigue damage. Hansman said that airworthiness could be assured with proper maintenance and identification of proper operational Limits of Validity (LOV) for aircraft structures where failure is potentially catastrophic. Limits of Validity, is the number of total accumulated flight cycles or flight hours or both. The report suggested that once LOV limits were reached the aircraft could remain airworthy if specific inspections, modifications or replacements were carried out. I must be honest with the readers that Prof. Hansman's research paper is so vast and I am unable to share all of it except the crux.

In conclusion the report finally submits its findings: The detailed analysis indicates that there is no connection between fatal accident rates and aircraft age up to 27 years of age for commercial jet aircraft with a MTOW greater than 60,000 lbs. Above this age there is a risk factor. Further the report states a detailed analysis of the accidents in which the aircraft were older than 20 years of age indicates that the percentage of aircraft age related accidents is significantly lower in Africa than in North America. This suggests that the observed increase in accident rates in

Africa is due to other risk factors that correlate with aircraft age such as weaker crew training, regulatory oversight and procedures. what I feel the wear and tear of an aircraft in colder climate is much greater than in temperate conditions. Wintery weather conditions, the salt and other chemicals that are used to clean up the snow can accelerate the corrosion process at a much faster rate. The research carried out by John Hansman eliminates the assumption that older aircraft and the age factor have any significant role in aircraft accidents, provided they met all the stipulated maintenance conditions and certification.

The recent finding of the UPS crash sheds more light on cause or likely scenario, quote Yahoo Finance: Investigators reveal UPS plane that



NTSB's SHOCKING Pics Show UPS Plane...

crashed had cracks in the left wing's Engine Mount, may be the Pylon, on the other hand NTSB vouch that UPS followed the necessary protocols regarding its major inspection of key engine parts that had fractures. It needed still 7000 take-off & landings, according to NTSB, and had its last check in October 2021. I am absolutely convinced even though the stipulated time frame is there, whether this will hold any good for aircraft over 18 years of age and the stress caused by operating 3 flights in a day with a heavy load? Former Federal Crash investigator Jeff Guzzetti, told the Associated Press after reading this report, that the FAA is now going to ponder whether this timeline is good enough or not. Another aspect that creeps into everyone's thought is, whether these cracks were already there and missed it in previous inspections? John Cox, another aviation expert described fatigue cracks as "normal wear and tear on an aircraft". He further said a metal part, like the engine mount that vibrates every time the plane flies and lands, will eventually develop cracks. Cox further elaborated, it is a question how often those parts need to be inspected and what kind of maintenance is required? Contemplating on his statement, I share my personal views: It is not the "right" time frame" that matters when an operator is using an older aircraft, this should be a moral obligation of all on ground to ensure "that pilot's and passenger's life hangs in the air", if we don't have a safe flying machine. This has to be the operator's primary obligation.

Sean Garber, I assume, another aviation authority had this to say when he studied the preliminary report of this crash, "It is one thing to be involved in a natural disaster and another thing to be involved in a man-made, human error tragedy, and that is what we believe this is. Former Federal Crash

investigator, Alan Diehl, said he hopes the Federal Aviation Administration reevaluates maintenance schedules and considers high tech methods to examine the metal, not as visual inspections, but by using X-Ray techniques to examine the cracks, instead of waiting for a major base check. I know most carriers don't do this because of the \$\$\$ involved. Diehl categorically said, "it is clear that engine pylon attachment failures are these aircraft's "Achilles heels".

It is too early, but we must patiently wait for the final report, maybe a year from now, but all these inferences were made after watching the video clip about how the left engine was getting detached from the aircraft, and it was a clear indication of metal fatigue. Watching it repeatedly on US ABC news, on a big 75-inch TV screen, I was shocked to see the unfortunate spectacle. Our prayers for all the unfortunate souls.

I am not a pundit in aviation, still an avid learner, but want to pen my 2 cents worth, if I may.

John Hansman's research paper was published in 2014 and all these 11 years no one paid any attention, even the FAA, NTSB, Airline operators, CEOs, Aircraft manufacturers and all the so called big-wigs. I wonder where the hell did, they go all these lost years? Did they wait for this incident to happen to put forward their million-dollar worth ideas and suggestions to prevent future incidents. It is really a shame that 3 crew members and 11 others on ground, including a couple of children lost their lives for no reason or rhyme at all. So sad this tragedy, that could and would have been prevented if people could have been more vigilant. This incident makes you think that "Human Life has no meaning".

Like to sum it up quoting "Slipshod Methods from Young People's Weekly:"

"Do your best, not your work is worth it, but because you are, you are making manhood. Half-hearted makes only half a man. Slipshod Methods mean loose principles. The only way to keep character up to the standard is by continually living up to the highest standard in all what you do"



K.N. Sivagnanasunderam (Blue)

Former Flight Operations
Officer, Air Ceylon Ltd.

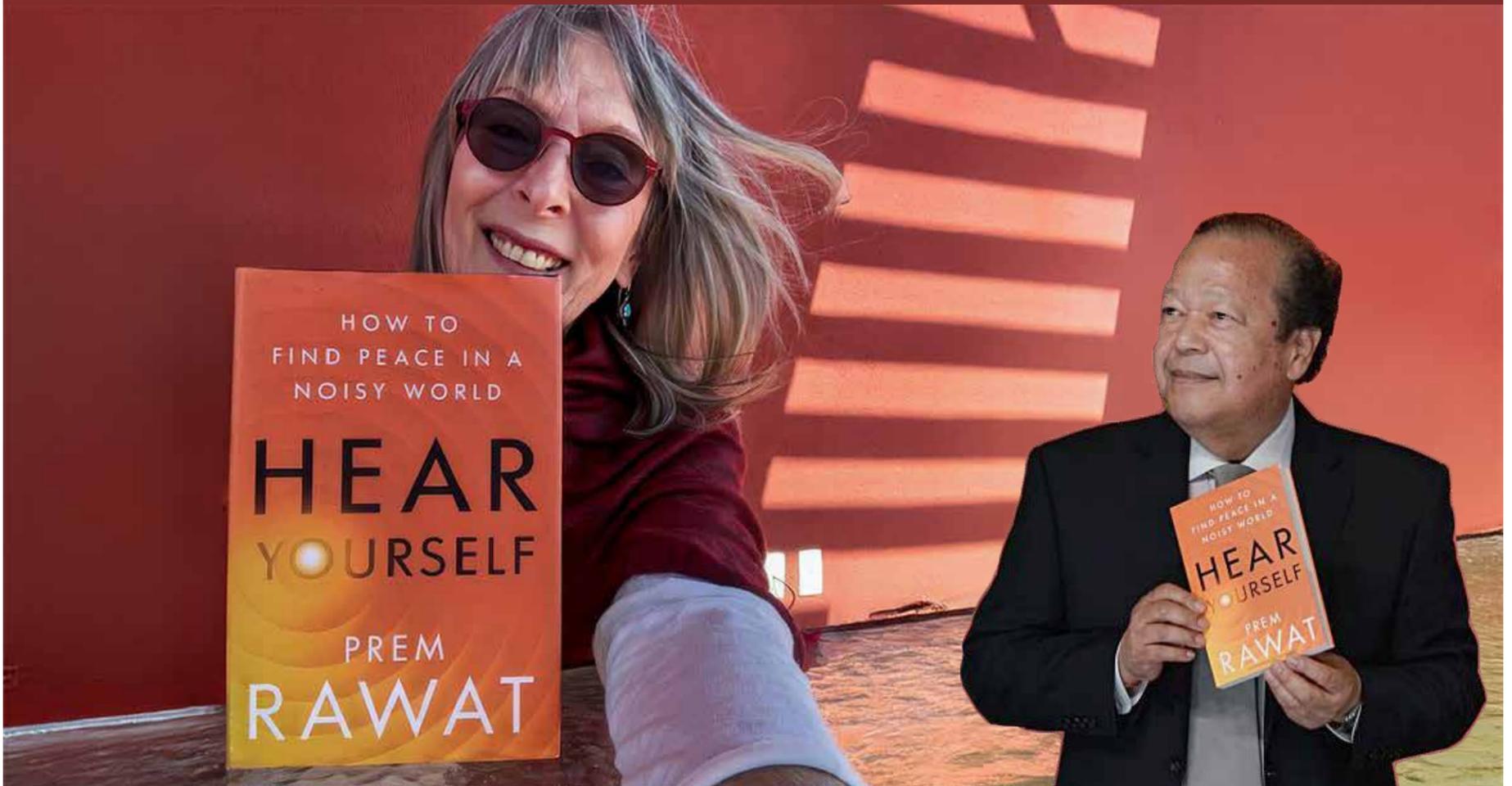
Kanesiva6@gmail.com

P.S.: I dedicate this write up to all the pilots whom I have worked with, my colleagues and friends, and to those pilots who took the final flight into the Sunset.



FREE YOURSELF THROUGH FORGIVENESS

(EXCERPTS FROM PREM RAWAT'S
BOOK "HEAR YOURSELF")



Conflicts happen when we lose respect for each other. In the absence of respect, our principles and rules become more important than people. The head takes over from the heart, then we start to project concepts onto those we are against. War propagandists have known for centuries that it pays to dehumanize the other side. If you turn your opposition into monsters, it makes it easier for decent people to have them. A society takes a step on the journey toward peace when it recognizes its enemy as human, and that happens one person at a time.

This brings me to the subject of revenge, of "I have been wronged, I must get even." That feeling can seem so deeply just, so rooted as in being right. Even more than this, it can feel as if you have to exact revenge to protect yourself. But does

that do anything other than breed fear, hatred, and a desire for revenge in others?.....

A different perspective on forgiveness

The path from fury to forgiveness can be steep and difficult, especially when great harm has been done to you and those you love. A breakthrough comes if we can see forgiveness not as meek acceptance but a courageous way to liberate ourselves from pain.

Some actions are so terrible, so damaging, so cruel, and so hateful, that they cannot be accepted. They must be met with justice. Forgiveness is about severing the relationship with the historic

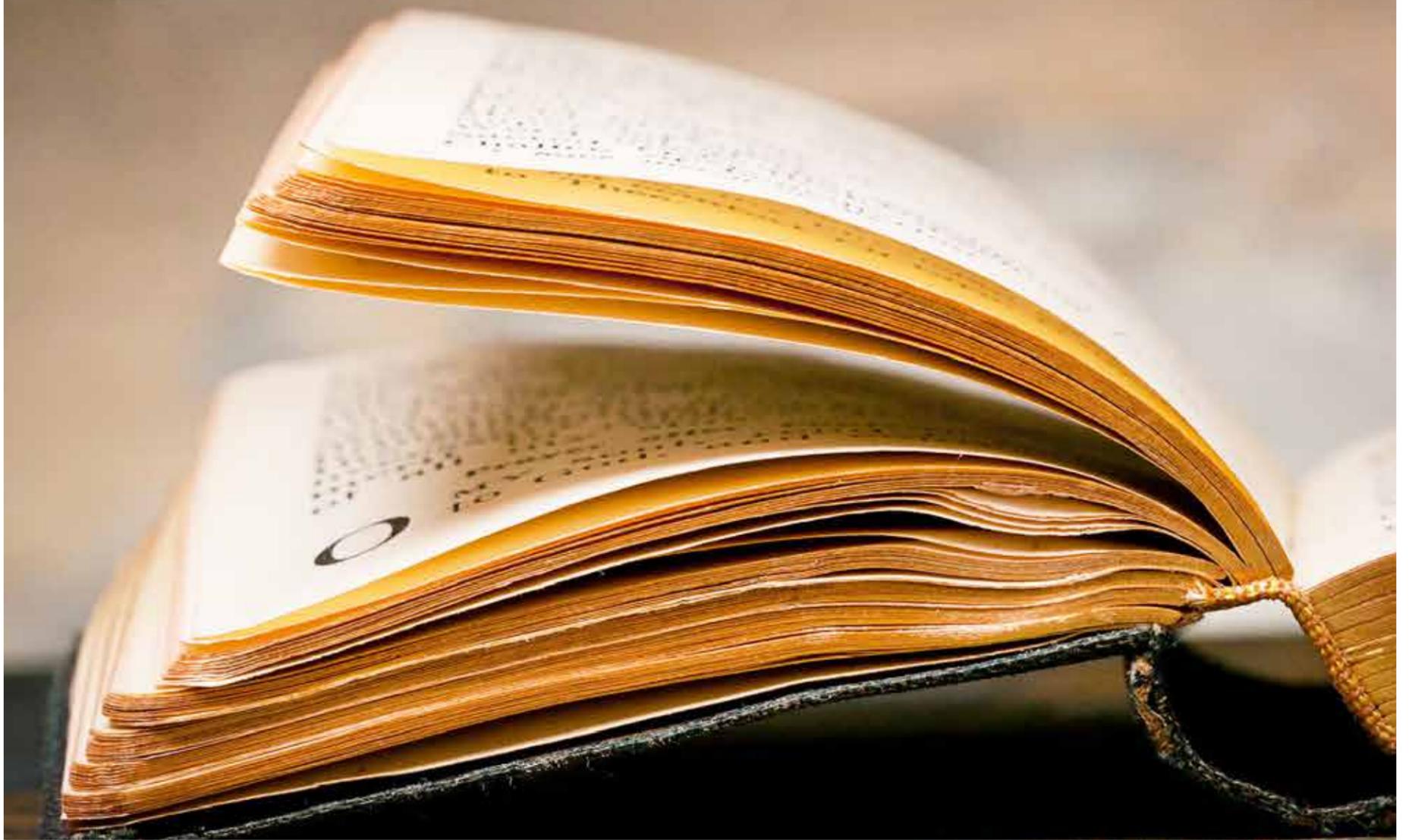
action, so it doesn't keep holding us back. Forgiveness does not set the perpetrator free of responsibility; it sets us free from the perpetrator.

I have met many survivors of conflict, and some of their stories have made me sob. I know that the sons and daughters of those killed in wars can grow up with revenge in their heart. The feeling we carry from such traumatic events are never easy to leave behind, but we take our first steps away from victimhood when we choose to act for ourselves. It is so impressive when a revenge seeker finds the inner strength to rise above their fear and fury. I have been amazed at people's determination to live well today, despite what happened to them in the past. And that is an important point; they suffered, but they do not want to live the rest of their life feeling like victim.

Words to Live by – Bible

By: J A Rajah

1. Pride goes before fall.
2. Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.
3. As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.
4. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.
5. The way of the fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.
6. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
7. A fool's lip enters into contention, and his mouth calls for blows.
8. Better is an open rebuke than hidden love.
9. A cheerful heart is always beneficial.
10. Who ever loves discipline loves knowledge but whoever hates correction is stupid.

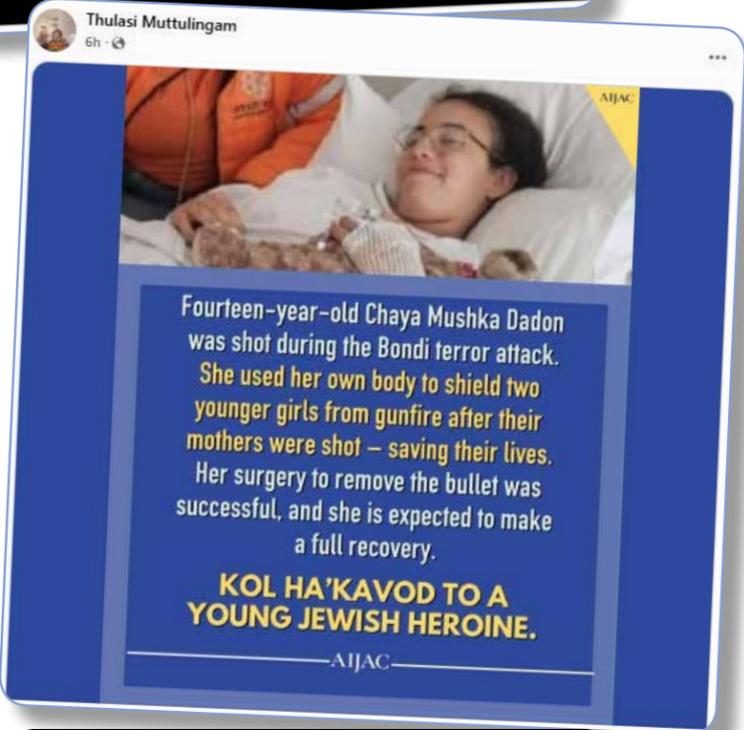




BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

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The fastest way to build confidence:
Start keeping promises to yourself. Tell yourself you'll wake up at 6, then do it. Say you'll work out, then do it. Commit to reading 10 pages, then do it. Every kept promise builds self-trust. That's all confidence is - evidence you can trust yourself.



Thulasi Muttulingam 6h

MIT Nuclear Science and Engineering
FACULTY
NUNO F. LOUREIRO
Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering
Herman Feshbach (1942) Professor of Physics
Director, Plasma Science and Fusion Center

Afshine Emrani 14h

I am absolutely sick to my stomach. We are living in a nightmare. We just learned that @MIT Professor Nuno Loureiro was shot and killed at his home in Brookline last night. This devastating news comes less than 48 hours after a shooter opened fire on a classroom at Brown University. We have to ask the hard questions: The classroom targeted at Brown? Usually occupied by a Jewish, pro-Israel professor. Professor Loureiro? Reportedly Jewish and pro-Israel. The timing? Right now, during Hanukkah. Both shooters are currently on the run. Is this the same person? Is this a coordinated ambush on Jewish academics at our elite universities?
This isn't just "crime"—this feels like hunting. We need answers, we need protection, and we need this madness to stop. Praying for the families of the victims. Stay safe, everyone

Thulasi Muttulingam 13h

Humans of Judaism 14h

The Nazis occupied our village when I was only 12 years old. At first they didn't realize we were Jewish. We looked like our neighbors. But then someone reported us. So our home was registered as a Jewish residence. We knew our days were numbered. Time was a ticking bomb. Then late one night a non-Jewish friend of ours showed up at our house. "Listen to me," he told us with great urgency. "Dig a hole under your fence and crawl out two at a time. Someone will meet you at the other end and lead you to safety. Tomorrow all the Jews in town will be executed".
His name was Kazi Bitdayev. And he secretly took all 6 of us to the neighboring village of Zheguta. He hid us there for 8 months, each week coming back for us and relocating us to a new basement or attic. He protected us. He fed us. He was our angel. After the war we searched for him for decades, desperate to thank him for saving our lives. But it was no use. We couldn't find him.
In 2021, we finally located Kazi's grandchildren. And got to thank them. A moment I waited for my whole life. Hashem has truly blessed me. Photo: Zinayida Segal, holding a picture of her rescuer Kazi. She passed away in 2022, one year after finding his family. Source: Chaim Danziger



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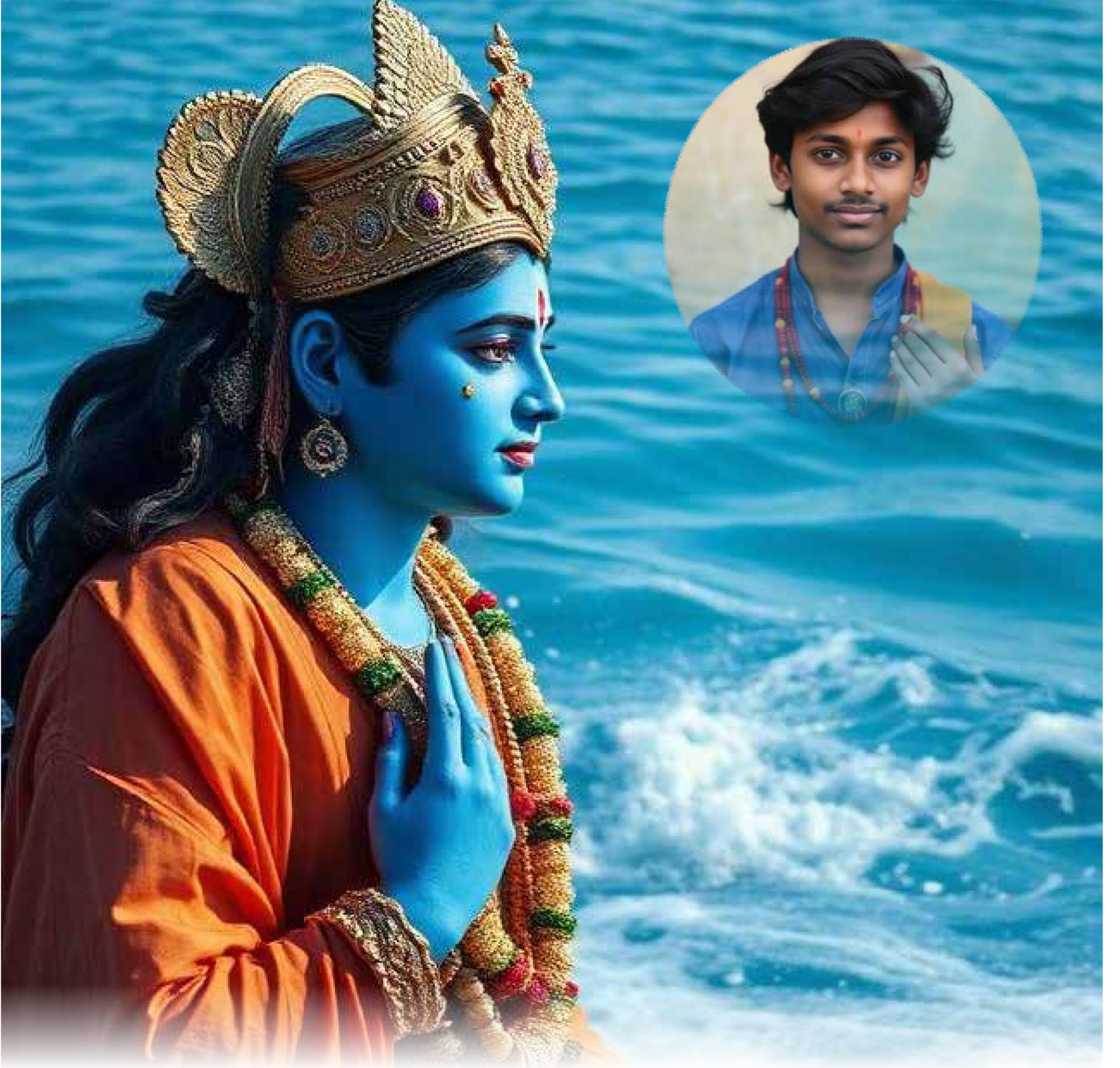
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WHO IS THE WITNESS?

Original in Tamil by Veenai Mainthan
English version by Siva Sinniah



A young fellow went to Perumal Temple every Sunday. Everyone used to wonder about his devotion at this young age. Soon after the noon Pooja he used to walk on the white sand in that burning Sun,

unmindful of the hot sand under his feet. He felt at ease walking on the glittering glass like sand particles.

The blue sea reminded him of the blue colored deity Krishna and he wondered

and appreciated the blue sea lashing towards the coast producing white foams. On a full moon day, he felt ecstatic and danced. He was overwhelmed at the bright full moon light and the rising sea waves.

Short Story

SPECIAL FEATURE



During the '80s in Sri Lanka, Sinhala Government and its army started hunting the Tamil youths. In many villages they were made victims for no reason. Many were imprisoned, many were arrested for inquiry and dragged from their homes. They were sent to the Boosa camp. They were tortured there and vanished without any trace.

As a result, many youths in the north and east of Sri Lanka, went to India and other foreign countries secretly and dubiously. Many agents came forward to help them and most of them were not honest. Our devotee also sought avenues to go abroad. He was helping his father in running their family business, a cool bar in town. Since some of his friends left abroad he also got the infection. He told his mother about his plan and went about looking for money from his relatives.

His father gave him some money and he was able to give that as an advance to an agent in his Village. As usual the agent got the money and his passport and told him to be ready at short notice to leave. Youths in this position usually wait for months and years dreaming of flights and travel overseas. Our Perumal devotee was not an exception to this position since the day he gave the money to the agent.

After several months his father asked him as to what happened to the money he gave to the agent. He told him "You could have stayed here looking after our business instead of trying to go abroad. I would have given this money on interest to someone instead of you. It looks like getting back the money is doubtful."

"Why are you in a hurry? Why not wait for a few months? His friends have written from abroad encouraging him", said his mother.

"I am trying to sell the business. If I get a good price, I will sell it. Then you and your son will know my value."

"You are worried about the money and not about your son," said his mother.

Vishnu, our devotee, was listening to his conversation and got upset and worried.

The next day, he got ready to go to the Temple as usual. He wore the blue shirt bought for the last Deepavali, the black colored lungi and the three sovereign gold chain given by his mother. He also had his ring in one finger and had Holy Ash and sandalwood "pottu" on his forehead. He went to his mother and told her that he is going to the temple. Mother looked at him and said you look like a bridegroom in this dress, come back safely. He went closer to her and said, look at me very well and bid me goodbye. She greeted him well by cracking her knuckles to drive away the evil around him and went up to the gate and bid him farewell.

It rained cats and dogs for four days at a stretch. The area surrounding Vallipuram Temple was flooded. Vishnu who went to the temple did not return home till Monday. Mother thought that he may have gone to his Auntie's place in Puloly. So, she decided to wait till tomorrow. Three days since he left home. So, the mother left for Puloly in search of him. She went straight to her cousin's house and found that he

never arrived there. Since Vishnu did not return from the temple even after four days, it raised concern among the relatives hence they started to search for him. First, they went to Vallipuram Temple and inquired.

"He came on Sunday and stayed for a long time in the temple. He did "archanai" for all the deities and gave a gold chain, asking me to put it on Perumal. He dropped the ring in the temple bill (Hundi). "He was a blessed boy," said the priest. People around the temple also joined in the search. They went to the Jumbo tree forest near the temple. A shepherd boy told them that he had seen a person with a blue shirt and black Lungi roaming around the forest. Then they started looking in every corner and under the bushes. An awful smell emanated from an area and they went towards it and found bits and pieces of a blue shirt and black lungi, soaked in the flood waters and submerged in the mud. They saw the skull and a few bones strewn all over. His body may have been eaten by wolves, forest cats and crows. Since the odour was unbearable no one could go near it. Seeing this, his mother started crying aloud and fainted after a while. An ambulance and police arrived at the scene and removed all his body parts, which were there. They found a letter in his shirt pocket torn and fully soaked in water. They opened it and arranged the pieces and read what was written there.

"I don't like you to spend a single cent for my funeral. Alwar told me to leave this world and come to him. He is the only witness for my demise".



CRICKET'S GRANDEST SPRINT:

THE **ICC MEN'S T20** WORLD CUP SET TO IGNITE GLOBAL PASSION

As the countdown begins, the cricketing world is bracing itself for another electrifying chapter in the game's shortest and most explosive format — the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Fast-paced, fiercely competitive, and unrelentingly entertaining, the tournament promises to once again unite fans across continents in a celebration of skill, strategy, and sporting drama.

Since its inception, T20 cricket has redefined how the game is played and consumed. Matches compressed into just three hours, batters taking audacious risks from the first ball, and bowlers forced to innovate under pressure have turned cricket into a global spectacle. The World Cup, the pinnacle of this format, showcases not only individual brilliance but also the evolving tactics that make T20 cricket a constantly shifting chess match.

This year's tournament brings together the world's top cricketing nations alongside ambitious emerging teams, each carrying the hopes of millions. Traditional powerhouses such as India, Australia, England, Pakistan, and the West Indies arrive with depth, experience, and star power. At the same time, associate nations and newer entrants are no longer content to merely participate — they arrive ready to compete, disrupt, and occasionally shock the giants of the game.

One of the defining attractions of the T20 World Cup is its unpredictability. Unlike longer formats, where dominance often unfolds over time, T20 cricket thrives on moments. A blistering 20-ball half-century, a hat-trick in the final over, or a stunning boundary catch can alter the fate of an entire campaign. This volatility levels the playing field and ensures that every match carries high stakes from the opening delivery.

Fans can also expect the spotlight to shine brightly on a new generation of cricketers. Young batters armed with fearless intent, fast bowlers clocking express pace, and spinners mastering variations will look to stamp their authority on the world stage. For many, this tournament represents a defining opportunity — a chance to transform potential into legacy under the glare of global attention.

Beyond the boundary ropes, the T20 World Cup is a cultural festival. Packed stadiums resonate with chants, national colors, and rhythmic drums, while millions more follow the action across television screens and digital platforms. The tournament transcends sport, becoming a shared global experience that connects diasporas, ignites friendly rivalries, and sparks conversations far beyond the cricket field.

Strategically, teams will need to strike a delicate balance between aggression and discipline. Powerplays demand attacking intent, middle overs test composure and rotation, and death overs separate the good from the great. Captains and coaches will rely heavily on data, match-ups, and adaptability, knowing that hesitation can be costly in a



format measured in seconds rather than sessions.

As the tournament approaches, expectations are soaring. Will defending champions hold their nerve? Can a former winner reclaim past glory? Or will a first-time champion emerge to rewrite history? These questions fuel anticipation and remind fans why the T20 World Cup occupies such a special place in modern cricket.

In a world that moves faster than ever, the ICC Men's T20 World Cup reflects the spirit of the times — bold, dynamic, and inclusive. For players, it is a test of courage and creativity. For fans, it is pure, unfiltered excitement. And for the game of cricket, it is a powerful reminder that tradition and innovation can thrive side by side.



THE CRUEL WORLD

Kumar Punithavel

Puranaanooru is an anthology of four hundred poems written during the Sangam era in Tamil Nadu, which begins around six centuries before the common era and lasts until two centuries post common era. This anthology comes under the group called puram which contains poems expressing War, Valor and social life. Among many poets contributed in these anthologies with some contributing more than one, the poem 194 was authored by Pakkudukkai Nankaniyar. His contribution to this anthology was only this one poem. The name Pakkudukkai is believed to be the name of his home town.

It is very common for us to say this world is a happy one especially if you are wealthy. But Nankaniyar was so angry looking at the suffering of the humans, calls this world a cruel one and further the creator of this world is an uncultured person. Let's go into the poem 194 of Puranaanooru in detail.

The poet must have been taking a walk on a quiet road in a village and was totally hurt by what he saw and put into words, which has lasted more than two millennia. Interestingly, the Tamil words that he used to compose this verse are still used in modern day Tamil language. What he saw while walking was, there was a funeral house on one side of it. And, at the same time in the house opposite was a wedding ceremony going on. Both sides were echoing with drum beats. One was a sad funeral drum beat and the other a happy wedding drum beat.

One house the funeral drums rattles,

One house the wedding drums roars loud,

ஓரில் நெய்தல் கறங்க, ஓர் இல் ஈர்ந் தண் முழுவின் பாணி ததும்பப்,

Those joined partner adorned flower garland

Those lost their partner teared in charming eyes,

புணர்ந்தோர் பூ அணி அணியப், பிரிந்தோர் பைதல் உண்கண் பனி வார்பு உறைப்பப்,
This uncultured creator's world is cruel

This nature of the cruel world once realized,



Tamil wedding with garlands.

They can live in this world blissfully.

படைத்தோன் மன்ற அப் பண்பிலாளன், 5
இன்னாது அம்ம இவ்வுலகம்,
இனிய காண்கிதன் இயல்பு உணர்ந்தோரே.

Lat us read the whole poem together and see how it sounds'

One house the funeral drums rattles, one house,

One house the wedding drums roars loud,



The partner tears in funeral.

Those joined the partner adorn floral garland,

Those lost their partner teared in charming eyes,

This uncultured creator's world is cruel,

This nature of the cruel world once realized,

They can live in this world blissfully.

ஓரில் நெய்தல் கறங்க, ஓர் இல் ஈர்ந் தண் முழுவின் பாணி ததும்பப், புணர்ந்தோர் பூ அணி அணியப், பிரிந்தோர் பைதல் உண்கண் பனி வார்பு உறைப்பப், படைத்தோன் மன்ற அப் பண்பிலாளன், 5
இன்னாது அம்ம இவ்வுலகம்,
இனிய காண்கிதன் இயல்பு உணர்ந்தோரே.

In just seven lines the poet has not only described the evil situation that

exists in this world as cruel, but also curses the creator of this world as an uncultured person.

Interestingly the great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar too had composed a couplet in his famous book Thirukkural, saying a person who was there yesterday is no more today. Let's have a quick glance at that couplet 336;

நெருந லுளனொருவன் இன்றில்லை என்னும் பெருமை யுடைத்திவ் வுலகு

One was yesterday; not today!

The wonder of the world's way!

Indeed, whoever comes to this world will be taken away so suddenly all those left behind have nothing but to shed tears and wait for their turn to come.



SPECIAL FEATURE

PEACE - THE BEDROCK OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



By: J A Rajah

Peace is the basic teaching of the Christian faith. Wherever Jesus went he pleaded for peace. He pronounced faith for all the broken souls. Zacchaeus was a broken soul being hated by men for his atrocious habit of forcing people to pay inflated taxes. He repented for his faults, climbed on a tree and wanted to have a look at Jesus. Jesus sensed his need and told him that he will visit him at his residence. Jesus never hesitated to grant peace to a troubled mind.

A. Commitment to Peace:

Jesus taught that peace comes through faithful commitment to peace-making which involves non resistance and reconciliation rather than retaliation. He urged his followers to be 'peace-makers', stating they would be blessed and called children of God. for actively working to create peace in a divided world. This involves generosity hence taking the 'other cheek' to challenge oppression and promote understanding.

In the life of Jesus, we observe several situations when he stepped in to maintain and sponsor peace. In domestic issues as well as in public matters he demonstrated the need for peace.

B. Peace and Social Stability:

Social stability depends on peace. It creates an environment where trust, cooperation and mutual respect can thrive. In peaceful societies individuals can focus on improving their well-being and pursue opportunities without the fear of violence or conflict.

C. Peace and the Sermon on the Mount:

Jesus championed the need for peace through both his teachings and his

actions; demonstrating a profound inner calm and actively working to reconcile people to God and one another. The sermon of the mount explicitly stated, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the 'children of God.'" This was the core tenet of his message calling his followers to actively create, not just wish for it. When he found that Judas was contrary to his expectations, he didn't dismiss him, but gave him the chance to repent. Jesus didn't hide from conflict. He advised him directly with facts and evidence. He gave Judas the chance to re-think his actions and come back to relationship with him. Truth spoken in love is Jesus's example out and out and over and over. It doesn't always change the heart of a person-as in the case of Judas.

Peter, a disciple and friend of Jesus denied his relationship with him as he feared the disapproval of Jewish leaders. Offense is one of the greatest dividers of humanity. Brother to brother, mother to daughter, friend to friend if offense can creep in, relationship is nearly impossible. Forgiveness is the antithesis of offense and it comes when we take our eyes off the perceived wrong and place them on the Father. Where you focus lie your heart will follow. When the Pharisees wrongly accused Jesus, he did not refute it. He was tortured and mocked when he was on the cross. He did not resist it. Jesus always avoided conflicts and confrontations. He retained his composure and relied on peaceful relationships. He said, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do".

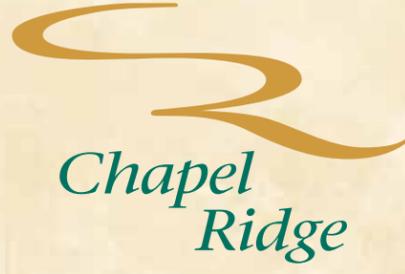
D. Holy Spirit and Peace:

When Jesus left, the Holy Spirit guided his followers. It will guard against the wiles of Satan. He is the Victor living in them. When the Holy Spirit is the

champion, the battle is already won. The Holy Spirit makes mature Christians powerful. It helps them to overcome conflict, hurt and failing relationships. Mature Christians are called to forgiveness and sanctification. They can continue to live a life of peace when propelled by the Holy Spirit.

E. Peace in the Modern World:

Even in the modern world peace is possible only if the Christian philosophy of peace is adhered to and applied. The Jews who crucified Jesus form the major part of the population of Israel. They are cruelly attacking the Palestinians and killing them in large numbers. Several Palestinians - about 9, 200 of them are in Israeli prison. They are being abused and tortured atrociously. 1.4 million people are living without access to clean water in Gaza city. Lack of shelter is exposing them to wintry conditions. Nearly two million people are removed from their homes and living in tents now. Heavy rainfall is flooding Gaza camps and people are suffering from adverse conditions. An amicable peace is the need of the hour. Christian countries like the U.S.A, U.K and France should join together and bring about a peaceful end to the conflict, without which a Third World War is unavoidable. Peace is the need of the hour. It is the vital precondition necessary for the world's prosperity and progress. Jesus is the greatest champion of peace that the world has ever seen and we see how the world has progressed through his message of peace in the nooks and corners of the world. He is indeed the Prince of Peace. Amidst the world of strife and conflicts it is the message of Christ that outshines all others as the force for the good or the beacon of light.



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EDUCATION & CAREER

BANNING THE USAGE OF CELLPHONES FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16-YEARS OLD: GOOD OR BAD?

By: Annabeth Francis

Grade 6 Student



Annabeth Francis

Banning cellphone use for children under sixteen years old is good because sometimes when parents give their child a phone, they start to get distracted. They also start to become addicted to their electronic device.

Most children get their first phones at the age of thirteen. I disagree with that idea because when you're thirteen, you're still in middle school, that's a bit too early. If you want to give your child a phone, then you should probably give them a flip phone. Usually, the right age to get your first phone would be around sixteen years old because sixteen is when you're mature enough to be trusted with a phone.

Most parents put their children in front of a TV screen for long periods of time because either they are too busy to take care of their children or they just don't know how to properly take care of them. Not only does this harm them because of the negative cyber environment, this is also very harmful to their family bonding because there would be no communication and interaction with the parents. Likewise, parents give phones to children to have the children occupy themselves, however, cellphones are not suitable for young children at all, as they do not have the ability to control their usage of a cellphone. Instead, parents should give attention to their children, and help their children focus on extra-curricular activities and sports such as basketball, soccer, or volleyball.

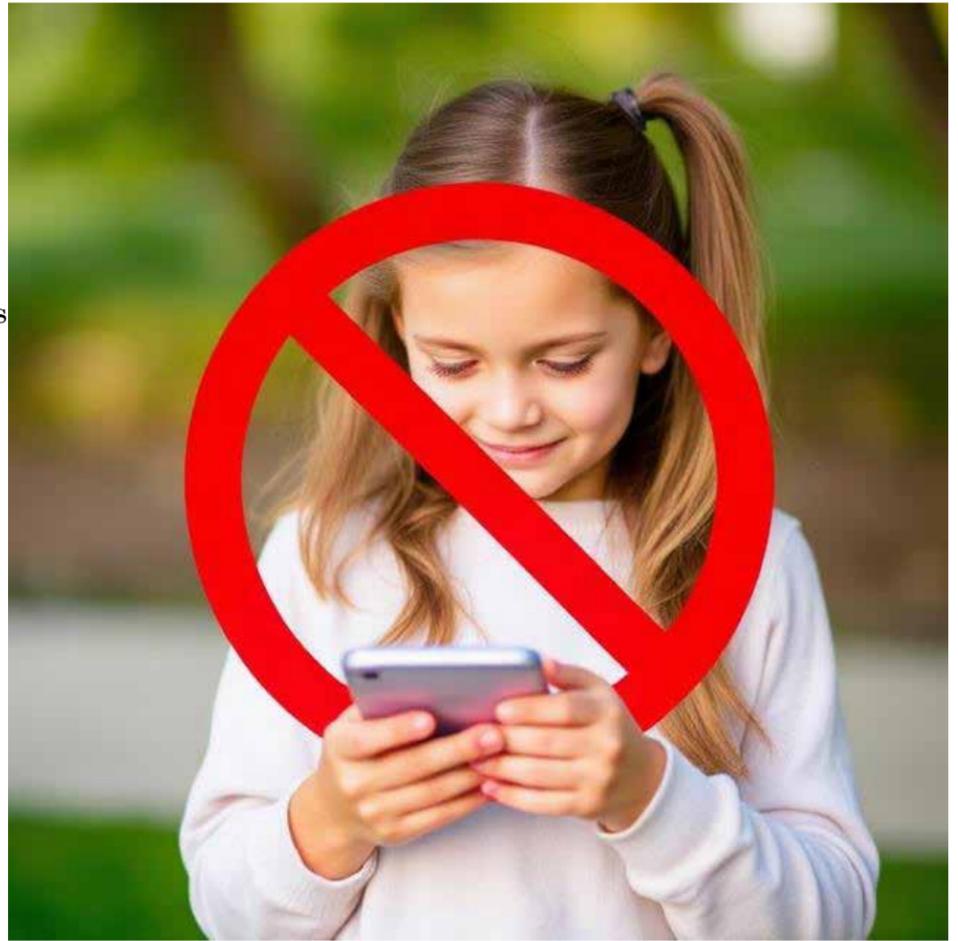
Secondly, children's mindset would change when they get their first cellphone because they content that they are exposed to on the internet is not as healthy or beneficial to their brains, especially as children's brains are consistently developing at young ages. Always being on the internet is not good because social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube have short video content, which studies have now shown that it is correlated to reduced attention time by young people. This is detrimental to children's lifestyle both academically and personally. Children may find it difficult to focus in class time when the teacher is teaching or during tests times when focusing is very important. Exposure to inappropriate or aggressive content is harmful to the mental wellbeing of young people. TV content for children should only be allowed to us Disney Plus, Netflix for children, and the Cineplex app or children friendly cartoons. That is ok because they are not getting negatively influenced.

I believe that a device like a computer can be given for educational purposes, but

parents should definitely limit the usage. Many electronic devices now have features to limit what children have access to which may be helpful in the parent's process of controlling what children are using their devices for. However, phones should only be given to children for safety and protection purposes. For example, if a child were to ever be in danger, they can immediately call parents or the police. Parents can also track their phones to know that they are in safe place.

The problem for children using phones is that when parents tell their children to not use their phones, they will start to ignore the instructions given by the parents and use the internet all the time. That is because they have already become too addicted. When children don't listen to what is being told by the parents, you know that the children have been scrolling through social media for a long time. That means that the child would not have been studying when they should have. Children instead get mad at parents for telling them to stop using or turn off the electronics. Parents are forced to put away phones, iPads, and laptops. The worse is when parents don't stop or lecture their children for the overusing phones because they know that no matter what they say or do, children won't listen.

In conclusion, children under the age of sixteen should not be given phones unless parents are able to limit the phone for only safety purposes as phones can result in the exposure to



dangerous content causing academic issues and personal problems such as reduced attention time. However, the first step to this is also for parents to reduce long term usage of phones to set a good role model to their children.



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REMEMBERING ARUMUGAM SUNTHARALINGAM ON HIS ANNIVERSARY 31.12.25

By: Kane Siva

This name has special significance in my life and career. But who was late Arumugam Suntharalingam? I would sum it up this way, an unassumingly, humble and genuine soul, who never stepped on another human being's toes, a fine gentleman. A person with sterling character and qualities which none of my other cousins had, except a couple of them in our family circle, and moreover he was a bridge builder. A year has flown since your passing away, but your presence, in our midst, lives on. You were such an amiable & loving human being to forget so easily. You left an indelible impression on our lives.

Late Suntharalingam was born as the eldest child of four children, in 1939 to Arumugam and Mankayatkarasi at Mallakam. His father was the Chief administrative officer at the Mallakam Magistrates' court. Suntha had his education at Skandavarodaya college, Chunnakam. He lost his father when he was, maybe, fifteen years old, I think. Raising the four children fell on the great shoulders of his mother, whom I always respected and held in high esteem. The passing away of his father at a young age made Suntha, a real resolute and responsible person, as he took the sheet anchor role of his family under the strict guidance of his mother. After his HSC, (Now a days Advance Level) he applied to train as a Medical Lab Technologist and was selected. The hands-on training and lectures by the MRI enabled him to start his vocation with great passion. His first posting was at the MRI, Medical Research Institute at Borella, Sri Lanka. He worked here for quite some time till he was transferred to work at the Government Hospital Ragama, Colombo. He continued his vocation after his transfer to the Government Hospital at Ratnapura.

I believe in 1971 he was selected to work in a hospital in Southern Africa, Zambia, as a Medical Technologist. He worked in various parts of Zambia for the Government hospitals. Eventually he was recruited by the Mufulira Town authorities to work in the Copperbelt Province, Malcom Watson hospital and continued to work there till he migrated to Canada, in 1989. Being a Medical technologist is a challenging and life-saving job and Suntha had a knack for it. His forte was "Histology" and he was really devoted to this field of study, and wherever he worked, offered his services

in this field of study. Suntha after migrating to Canada, worked as a volunteer at Grace Hospital, Birchmount, Toronto. He eventually was selected to work at Toronto General hospital, then at Mount Sinai for some time and even after retiring, continued his passion by working for Centenary Hospital at Scarborough till the time of his passing.

Late Suntha, was my paternal cousin and was very attached to my father. Even though he was born in Mallakam, his father's roots were from Suthumalai, Manipay. He was one of my favorite cousins of all my relations from my father's side. Suntha was a person who really encouraged others' success and motivated others in their studies and career. I remember when I got through my G.C.E. O.L. in Sri Lanka in my first attempt with 3 credits and passing all the 8 subjects in 1966, a first in our family circle, he was so happy and when he came from Colombo for vacation presented me with a "Concise Oxford English Dictionary", and I proudly cherish this, and still sits in my bookshelf in Scarborough, and both my children always remember his gesture. On another occasion when he visited our home in Suthumalai, suggested to my father to send me to Colombo to study at Aquinas University College, Borella, Colombo. I would say this was a real turning point in my life and made me progress and I would say it was a real blessing (his suggestion) in my life. Suntha was really a good cousin to me and since I am the eldest in my family, he was there for me to look upon and to call him as my own elder brother, in Tamil, we call "Annai" and thanks to God he was really a good Annai, and one of the best. Suntha was my real advisor and confidant to me in our family circle and I always shared my happy and sad moments with him. He was my counselor. When I felt something wrong with my siblings or with my other cousins, I always turned to my beloved Annai for his advice, solace and guidance. He had been helpful in soothing my worries. He was a real healer. Whenever he visited our home, both our children hugged him with great love. He said always to my wife, "Thamby is my Kunji Appu", since I am a picture of my grandfather late Thinakarar Kanapathipillai, who was a grandfather for him too.



Suntha was one of the hereditary trustees of our Temple, Suthumalai Amman Kovil. As usual in any family, there are always issues in our families too due to certain affairs. Suntha never took anyone's side but always did the right thing and respected others' views in the management of the temple trustee board.

Suntha had a peaceful passing away, in the sense, never was stricken with any illness, but passed away peacefully in his sleep. In our Tamil custom they always say this, "the way a person departs this world you can always say how that person had lived".

He is survived by his beloved wife of 55 years, Easwari, son Prasanth, a Micro-Biologist, daughter Gita who holds a Masters in Finance, works for a bank in England, his two grandchildren, his beloved sister Paapa acca, and his younger brother Mani Annai.

Annai You are no more but the memories you left will always stay in our 4 Chambers forever. We, as a family, without batting an eyelid say, will miss you dearly.

Words alone cannot match your qualities and character as such; I want to sum it with a fitting tribute. Our Annai, I am sure, would be happy with my quote, of Andrew Bonar,

**"My name, and my place, and my tomb, all forgotten,
The brief race of time well and patiently run,
So let me pass away, peacefully, silently,
Only remembered by what I have done".**

Good night Sweet Prince

K.N. Sivagnanasunderam (Blue)

kanesiva6@gmail.com



PROVINCIAL BLUE BOX PROGRAM CHANGES COMING JANUARY 1

New program owner and customer service contact;
same blue box and schedule

BLUE BOX CHANGES

Starting January 1, 2026



New program owner &
customer service contact



Same collection
schedule & blue box

RichmondHill.ca/BlueBox



The Province of Ontario is transitioning the blue box program to a new model that makes producers of recyclable materials responsible for their collection and processing instead of municipalities. Starting January 1, 2026, residential recycling in Richmond Hill will be managed by Circular Materials, a non-profit organization that represents producers.

Richmond Hill residents who receive curbside waste collection will continue to receive uninterrupted recycling collection service, but should be aware of the following:

What's changing

Starting January 1, 2026:

- **New program owner, same collection contractor:** Miller Waste will provide blue box collection on behalf of Circular Materials.
- **New customer service contact:** All blue box related inquiries, including missed collections and requests for new blue boxes must be made directly to Miller Waste, instead of the City. Contact details will be posted to the City website once they are available.

- **Separate trucks for recycling/organics:** Blue boxes and green bins will be collected by separate trucks (at different times during the day) instead of being co-collected on the same truck.

- **Residents can recycle more materials:** New items include hot and cold takeout cups and lids, plastic bags, foam packaging, black plastic containers, deodorant sticks and toothpaste tubes.

What is NOT changing

- **Collection schedule:** There will be no changes to the collection schedule, but collection times will vary.
 - **Blue box:** Residents can continue to put their recycling out in the same blue box they are using now.
 - **Garbage, organics and yard waste collection:** The City will continue to collect garbage (including furniture and larger items), green bins and yard waste, as well as large appliances (by appointment) following the current collection schedule.
- City staff are working with Circular Materials to help ensure a smooth transition and keep our community informed.



SENECA POLYTECHNIC PARTNERS WITH CITY OF MARKHAM TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY IN FIRE PROTECTION

City of Markham Mayor, Frank Scarpitti and Seneca Polytechnic President, David Agnew, are joined by students from Seneca Polytechnic's School of Fire Protection Engineering Technology



City of Markham Mayor, Frank Scarpitti and Seneca Polytechnic President, David Agnew, are joined by students from Seneca Polytechnic's School of Fire Protection Engineering Technology.

A generous contribution from the City of Markham will enhance access to Seneca Polytechnic's renowned School of Fire Protection Engineering Technology, improve the student experience and provide additional opportunities for hands-on learning.

The City of Markham Entrance Award will be presented to students from equity-deserving groups who are entering Seneca's Firefighter, Pre-Service Education and Training certificate program. Eight students will receive the bursary over a four-year period, starting in Winter 2026.

"We deeply appreciate the support the City of Markham is providing to our students and future graduates through this donation," says David Agnew, President, Seneca Polytechnic. "We share a commitment to both public safety and ensuring that all students have access to education and training that will prepare them for rewarding careers serving their communities."

The City of Markham is also donating two decommissioned fire trucks. These rescue pumper trucks will be used to simulate real-world emergency response scenarios, helping Seneca students build the skills that they will need for successful careers in fire protection.

"We're extremely proud to be partnering with Seneca Polytechnic on this award," says Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti. "The City of Markham Entrance Award helps open doors for students who might otherwise face financial barriers, giving them the support they need to pursue the education and certifications required for a career in firefighting. It will offer a meaningful opportunity for students to prepare for a future in any professional fire service across Ontario."

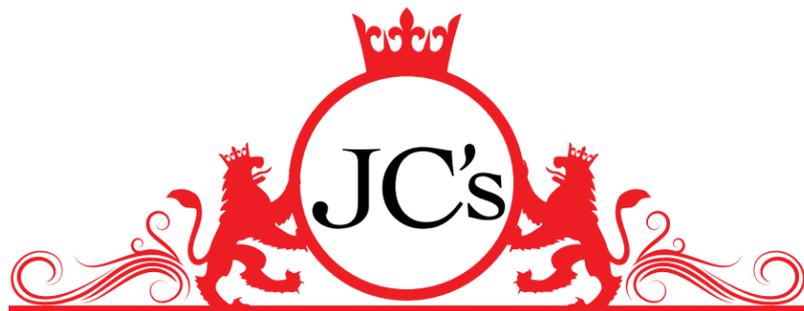
About Markham:

Markham, an award-winning municipality with over 370,000 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.

About Seneca Polytechnic:

Seneca Polytechnic provides a great education to prepare our students for great careers. Combining academic rigour with practical, professional and career-focused learning, we offer our students a seamless transition from education to employment. Expert faculty, excellent staff, outstanding campuses, awesome technology, deep connections with industry: This is Seneca Polytechnic.



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COMMUNITY WATCH



Durham Tamils Association Celebrating 25 Years Of Serving Our Tamil Community

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

SAVE THE DATE: TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH AND PONGAL VIZHA

DTA is excited to host our Tamil Heritage Month celebration and Pongal Vizha.

Date: Sunday, January 25, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex · 1867 Valley Farm Rd, Pickering, ON L1V 6K7



Durham Tamil Association TAMIL CLASS

Durham Tamil Association offers Tamil classes for children and adults who are interested in learning the language in an innovative and effective way.

Tamil Class Registration for the 2025-2026 School Year is Now Open! Available in Two Locations: Ajax and Oshawa

- JK & SK
 - Grade 1-8
 - Grade 9-12 (Credit Course)
- REGISTER ONLINE: durhamtamils.org

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For more

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DTA 2025 HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

DTA hosted its annual Holiday Celebration, filled with joy, laughter, and holiday cheer. Santa made a special appearance to spread smiles and hand out gifts to the children, making the day truly magical. The event was a wonderful success, made possible by the incredible hard work and dedication of the Program Committee and our amazing volunteers who brought everything together. A big thank-you to the Executive Team for their continued support in making this festive celebration so special for everyone.

DTA'S HOMELAND PROJECTS

DTA is proud to announce that we have completed over 130 homeland projects as of Dec 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.



COMMUNITY WATCH



DTA'S SENIORS

DTA is keeping our seniors fully occupied with multiple activities and programs. DTA is here to support you in any way. If you want to participate in our programs, please check our monthly calendars. Please register for virtual Seniors programs at durhamtamils.org. Thank you to our fantastic volunteers who do not expect anything and are serving the community voluntarily. DTA is truly grateful for your continued support.

THANK YOU TO DTA'S ANNUAL SPONSORS

DTA thanks our annual sponsors Computek College of Business, Healthcare & Technology. **Nava Wilson LLP. Chapel Ridge Funeral Home & Cremation**, and all our sponsors for your continued support throughout the year. If you are interested in being annual sponsor please reach out to the below contacts. For more information on all DTA's Community Support Programs and Sponsor contacts please visit: [www. DurhamTamils.Org](http://www.DurhamTamils.Org)
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DTA SENIOR'S DECEMBER MONTHLY MEETING

DTA Senior's monthly meeting will be held on Sunday Jan 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.



City of Brampton advances healthcare with land donation to Kay Blair Hospice enabling Brampton's first-ever hospice



Ceremonial signing at Brampton City Hall marking the City's land donation in support of Brampton's first hospice.

Credit: City of Brampton

On this day, Members of Brampton City Council and Members of the Kay Blair Hospice Board gathered for a ceremonial signing to mark the City's land donation supporting the development of Brampton's first-ever 12 bed hospice residence operated by Kay Blair Hospice. This milestone advances local access to end-of-life care and supports hospital bed capacity at William Osler Health System by providing an appropriate care setting for patients who no longer require acute care services.

The new hospice residence will provide local end-of-life care in a homelike environment supported by trained staff and volunteers working together to provide compassionate care for individuals and their families. The model provides hospice services at no cost to individuals. The development in Brampton will offer care in an inclusive setting, reflecting the city's cultural diversity and the values of dignity and comfort that guided Kay Blair's work in the community.

In April 2022, Brampton City Council received a delegation from Kay Blair Hospice outlining the need for local hospice care. Council supported the request for a City land contribution and directed staff to advance the proposal. Following that direction, the City has committed nearly 1.7 acres of municipally owned land at Countryside Drive and Bramalea Road for the development of the hospice residence.

Kay Blair Hospice continues its work to secure capital funding for the construction phase and to finalize the design of the

facility which will include space for family support and community programming related to end of life care including bereavement support. The project and land contribution support provincial planning for additional hospice beds and to build capacity in the community for compassionate end-of-life care close to home.

Kay Blair Hospice is a not-for-profit charitable organization governed by a passionate board of directors with dedicated volunteers. The organization is named to honour Kay Blair, a noted community leader and advocate for equity and humanity in health care and housing.

Quotes

"Investing in health and wellness for our residents is a priority for Brampton. This hospice will provide compassionate care closer to home for families when they need it most, while also helping William Osler Health System by ensuring acute care beds remain available for those who need urgent hospital treatment. I want to thank Regional Councillor Paul Vicente for championing the proposal for the City to provide land for this project. Today's signing represents an important milestone for our community and demonstrates Council's strong commitment to improving access to end-of-life care in Brampton."

- Patrick Brown, Mayor, City of Brampton

"Bringing a hospice to Brampton fills a critical gap in local care. Kay Blair Hospice is built on dignity and

compassion, and this land donation helps move their mission forward – providing end-of-life care in a safe, compassionate and inclusive environment. I was honoured to put forward this motion, with the support of Council, to help establish critical hospice care for Brampton residents and their families for generations to come."

- Paul Vicente, Regional Councillor, Wards 1 and 5

"The land donation from the City is a major step toward building Brampton's first hospice residence. On behalf of our Board I want to thank the Mayor and Council for their support and partnership on this project. Our goal is to provide comfort, support, and dignity for individuals and their families and today's milestone brings this community based hospice closer to reality."

- Per Homer, Chair, Kay Blair Hospice

About Brampton:

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, Brampton is home to 800,000 people and more than 110,000 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 www.brampton.ca



CELEBRATE RESPONSIBLY: DON'T LET IMPAIRED DRIVING RUIN THE HOLIDAYS

The City of Mississauga reminds drivers to stay sober and alert on the roads to prevent collisions



The holiday season is one of the most joyful times of the year, but one mistake on the road can turn joy into sorrow. The City of Mississauga continues to see road collisions due to impaired driving, and it gets worse during the holidays. The City, in partnership with Peel Regional Police, is reminding all drivers visiting friends and family or running errands, to do so responsibly.

Driving under the influence of alcohol, cannabis or certain drugs is a serious offence. It adds to winter driving challenges such as freezing rain, snow and reduced daylight hours.

According to Peel Regional Police, impaired driving continues to be one of the top contributing factors for serious and fatal collisions. Between January 1 and November 24, 2025, there were 97 impaired driving-related collisions on Mississauga roads. To combat impaired driving in Mississauga, Peel Regional Police continues with the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) program.

RIDE checks are conducted throughout the year, but the holiday campaign

includes increased enforcement levels and additional officer deployment. As of November 24, 2025, Peel Regional Police has investigated 3,052 vehicles as part of the program.

How drivers can ensure a safe and enjoyable holiday season

- Arrange a designated driver, use rideshare services or take public transit if you're planning on consuming alcohol or using cannabis.
- If you're planning on celebrating away from home, consider staying the night.
- Don't let friends and family drive impaired.
- Call 911 if you suspect someone is driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Impaired driving puts everyone at risk. Plan ahead, stay sober behind the wheel and help keep Mississauga roads safe for all users.

To learn more about impaired driving, visit peelpolice.ca/en/safety-tips/road-safety.aspx

Learn more about road safety in Mississauga: mississauga.ca/roadsafety

Quotes

"Every safe choice behind the wheel makes a difference. Impaired driving is entirely preventable. If you plan to drink or use cannabis, make sure you have a safe ride home. You can designate a driver, use MiWay to get around, a rideshare program or taxi. Don't put your life and other's lives in danger during the holidays and beyond. Remember to be alert on roadways and drive safely."

– Sam Rogers, Commissioner, Transportation and Works, City of Mississauga

"In partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada, we're continuing with our seasonal Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) program to ensure safer roads. As you enjoy the holiday season, please remember that it's your responsibility to be safe on the roads. Driving impaired can seriously hurt or kill someone. Don't risk it!"

– Deputy Chief Marc Andrews, Peel Regional Police



SPECIAL FEATURE

MUNDESHWARI DEVI TEMPLE, RAMGARH VILLAGE, BIHAR, INDIA

Compiled by Kidambi Raj

INTRODUCTION

The *Mundeshwari Devi Temple* is an ancient Hindu temple dedicated to the worship of Goddess Durga and God Siva and considered the *oldest functional temple in the world*. This tops the list of oldest Hindu temples in India. It is located at *Ramgarh village*, 608 feet (185 m), on *Mundeshwari Hills* of *Kaimur plateau* near *Son River* in the *Bhojpuri region* of the Indian state of *Bihar*. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has dated the temple structure to 108 CE making it the oldest Hindu temple in the world. However, there are other version for the dating, stating the Saka era, prior to Gupta dynasty rule (320 AD) in India, and specifically to 105 AD according to the Administrator of the Bihar Religious Trust Board. The ASI survey also established that there was a religious and an educational centre spread over the hillock and *Mandaleshwar* (Siva) temple was the main shrine. The *Mandeshwari* (Durga) was on the southern side.

ABOUT THE TEMPLE

Nestled on the Mundeshwari Hills near the Son River in Bihar's Kaimur district, the temple has enjoyed protected status since 1915 and remains a magnet for pilgrims and tourists alike. Its distinctive octagonal shape and Nagara architectural style distinguishes it, with the main shrine housing a four-faced Lingam representing Siva as *Viniteswara*, while the goddess Mundeshwari or Durga resides in a niche on one of the spirituality, *Ashtadal*, or the eight-petaled lotus, holds profound significance. Each petal symbolizes different attributes associated with the *Ashtamatrika Goddesses*, integral to various Hindu traditions, particularly in Shaktism. These Goddesses, with their individual powers, are revered across India, embodying divine energies linked to cardinal directions. The Ashtamatrika goddesses and their respective petal associations on the Ashtadal are as follows: 1. *Brahmani* – East, 2. *Maheshwari* – Southeast, 3. *Kaumari* – South, 4. *Vaishnavi* – Southwest, 5. *Varahi* – West, 6. *Indrani* – Northwest, 7. *Chamundi* – North and 8. *Narasimhi* – Northeast. These goddesses are revered in various parts of India, and their worship is integral part of local traditions and rituals. They are considered protectors and divine forces representing the energies of the cardinal directions.

On the eastern slope of the hills, there has been a find of number of statues and rock carved figures. It is clear that the hill was once the site for a cluster of temples and the Mudeshwari temple was the main shrine. They include mostly representations of Shiva-Parvati, Ganesha, Mahishasuramardini Durga, Surya and Kartikeya.

HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE WITH TIME LINE



There was an inscription on a stone slab at the temple, which had broken into two pieces, one of which was found in 1892 and the other in 1903 by Bloch in the course of clearing the debris. Both the pieces are now in the Indian Museum in Kolkata. Rakhal Das Banerji and Nani Gopal Majumdar, two archaeologists agreed that the inscriptions referred to King Udayasena and to date 30 of an unspecified era. R.D. Banerji took the year 30 to refer to the Harsha era commencing from CE and assigned the epigraph to 636 CE, which was also included as the date of the original Gazetteers of Shahabad in 1906 and 1924, But, N.G. Mazumdar studied the paleographic peculiarities of the inscription and referred to the year 30 to the Gupta era 318-19 CE and held the date of inscription to 348-49 CE. Dr. Devadatta Ramakrishna Bhandarkar, an archaeologist and epigraphist with ASI, also considered the inscription to be much earlier than the fourth century CE. The discovery of the royal seal of the Sri Lankan ruler, Maharaja Duthagamini at the site in 2003 has taken back the history of the region by several centuries. Dr. J.S. Roy sent the seal to Sampooranand Sanskrit University at Varanasi for deciphering. The linguistic experts there concluded that the seal belonged to *Maharaj Duthagamini*, who according to Mahavansh Granthawali in Buddhist literature, belonged to the *Anuradhapur dynasty* who ruled Ceylon between 104-77 BCE. The existence of Naga (serpent) on four-faced *Siva Lingam*, *Naga janeu* (scared thread) on Ganesha idols not found anywhere in India and also on broken pieces scattered around the hill clearly indicated that it was a construction by the rulers of Naga Dynasty (110 BCE to 315 CE), who used serpent as their royal sign. The Hindu Saka Calendar began in 78 CE with the

Saka Era. *Shaka Samvat* year 30 when juxtaposed with the Gregorian calendar coincides with 108 CE by that account. Further the script also corresponds to the Shaka times, and prior to the Gupta age. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) now dates the temple to 108 CE.

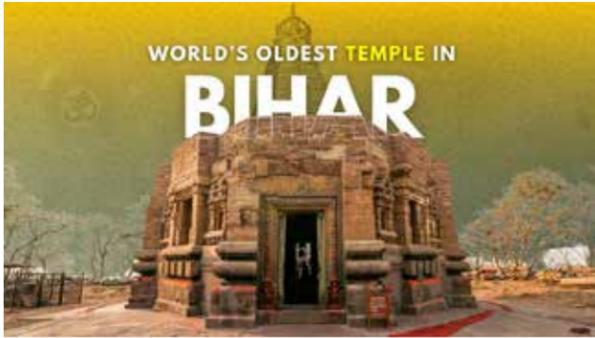
HISTORICAL TIME LINES

- **636 – 38** – Chinese visitor Huen Tsang writes about a shrine on a hill top flashing light, at about a distance of 200 miles south west to Patna – the location is only of Mundeshwari.
- **1790** – Daniel brothers, Thomas and William visited Mundeshwari temple and provided its first portrait.
- **1888** – Buchanan visited the region in 1813.
- **1891-92** – First part of the broken Mundeshwari Inscription was discovered by Bloch during a survey by East India Company.
- **1903** – Second part of the temple was discovered while clearing the debris around the temple.
- **2003** – Brahmi script royal seal of Sri Lanka King Duthagamini (101-77 BCE) was discovered by Varanasi based historian Jahnawi Shakhari Roy which changed the earlier findings about the history of the place.
- **2008** – The date of the inscription was established as 30th year of Saka era (108 CE) by the scholars in a national seminar organized for the purpose by Bihar State Religious Trust Board at Patna.

ARCHITECTURE

The temple, built of stone, in an octagonal plan, which is not common. It is the earliest specimen of the *Nagara style* of temple architecture

SPECIAL FEATURE



in Bihar. There are either doors or windows on four sides and small niches for statues in the remaining four walls. The temple *shikara* or tower has been destroyed. However, a roof has been built, as part of the renovation work. The interior walls have niches and hold mouldings which are carved with vase and foliage designs. At the entrance to the temple, the door jambs are seen with carved images of *Dwarapalaks*, *Ganga*, *Yamuna* and many other murtis. The main deities in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple are of the *Devi Mundeshwari* and *Chaturmukha* (four-faced) *Shiva Linga*. There are also two stone vessels of unusual design. Even though the Shiva Linga is installed in the centre of the sanctum, the main presiding deity is *Devi Mundeshwari*, inside a niche, which is seen with ten hands holding symbols riding a buffalo, attributed to *Mahishasuramardini*. The temple also has murtis of other popular gods such as, *Ganesha*, *Surya* and *Vishnu*. A substantial part of this stone structure has been damaged, and many stone fragments are seen strewn around the temple. However, under the jurisdiction of ASI, it has been the subject of archaeological study for quite some time.

RENOVATION AND RESTORATION

The Archaeological Survey of India has restored the temple under instruction from the Union Ministry of Culture. Restorative work included the removal of soot from the temple interior using chemical treatment, repair of damage to the murti (idol) and cataloging and



documenting the scattered fragments for later reuse. Other works included installation of Solar powered lighting, displays for antiquities and provision for public amenities. The Govt. of Bihar spent Two crores Rupees to improve the access to the temple.

WORSHIP

It is believed that rituals and worship have been performed here without a break, as Mudeshwari is considered the deity of one of the most ancient functional Hindu temple in the world. The temple is visited by a large number of pilgrims each year particularly, during the *Ramanavami* and *Shivaratri* festivals. A big annual fair (mela) is held nearby during the Navaratri time, visited by thousands of devotees. The worship of Shakti in the form of Devi Mundeshwari in the temple is indicative of the tantric cult of worship, which is practiced in Eastern India,

UNIQUE RITUAL

The Mundeshwari temple is renowned for its enigmatic practice of *Ahimshak Bali*, or non-violent sacrifice, which perplexes and astonishes visitors from around the world. Unlike traditional sacrifices killing animals, this unique ritual ensures the well-being of the sacrificial



animal. Such a sacrifice method, unheard of elsewhere, left one, questioning its nature and significance. Upon inquiry it was learnt that instead of taking the life of the animal, the temple priest gently lays the animal down and places a flower upon it, while reciting scared mantras. Remarkably, as the flower is laid upon the animal, the animal enters a state of unconsciousness, remaining motionless until the flower is removed. After the completion of the ritual or pooja, the flower is taken away, and the animal regains consciousness, seemingly unharmed by the experience. The mechanics behind this phenomenon remains a mystery, sparking wonder and speculation among observers. Despite the lack of a concrete explanation, devotees who visit the temple attribute this phenomenon to the blessings of Maa Mundeshwari, finding solace and reverence in this extraordinary practice.

LEGEND

The Mudeshwari temple boasts a rich history intertwined with captivating legends. According to one tale, *King Surath of Mithila*, seeking to reclaim his lost kingdom, was advised by a sage to worship Lord Shiva and Shakti. Directed by the sage to erect a temple at a specific area, where he witnessed a divine light. So, King Surath constructed the temple atop the *Mudeshwari Hills*. As a symbol of divine power, he also placed a chakra or discus, atop the temple, which is believed to possess miraculous abilities.

The origin of the name *Mundeshwari* is steeped in mystery, often associated with the legendary figure *Munda*, a *Daitya* mentioned in the Puranas alongside *Chanda*. Some local legends suggest Munda and Chanda, described as military commanders of the *Daitya Kings Shumbha and Nishumbha*, who met their demise at the hands of Devi Durga, also known as *Chamunda*. This association is reflected in the temple's name, drawing from the names of the Daitya brothers.

Another intriguing legend proposes that the temple was constructed by *Lord Parasurama*, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Seeking penance for the regretful act of slaying His mother at His father's command, Lord Parasurama performed rigorous penance on the Mundeshwari Hills, venerating Shiva and Shakti. As a testament to His devotion, He is said to have created *Parasurama Kund*, a lake in the vicinity of the temple.

PLACES OF INTEREST NEARBY

- **Baidyanath Temple (Deohalia, Ramgarh):** It is a Shiva temple with an Octagonal base and a Shikar, similar to the Kendaria Mahadev temple of Khajuraho. It is believed that this temple was built in the 11th century by Chandel Raja Vidyadhar Dhang. He also constructed four ponds, *Dhruv Kund*, *Rudra Kund*, *Brahma Kund* and *Vishnu Kund* at the four corners of the temple, two of which exist today.
- **Mother Chherwari Dham:** This temple was built in 15th century by the **Rathore dynasty** who came from Chittorg and Mewar in the Ramgarh area. They established the statue of their *Kuldev Chherawari* mother, in the desert of Mahur village. The Goddess Mother is in the form of *Sherawali*.



- **Chandeshwari Dham (Madurana, Chainpur):** Located on the southern **Madurana Hill** of Chanpur stretch, this temple is known as *Chandeshwari Dham Sidhpith*. It is believed that the name of Chand's wife was Madan. Today, this place is known as *Madurana village*. This is close to Mundeshwari temple.
- **Kuleswari Dham (Kulhadia, Durgavati):** Due to Kuldevi being the Nagvanshi Rajputa, settled in about 105 villages of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the temple is popularly known as Kuleswari Dham.
- **Telhar Kund / Waterfall (Adhaura):** The Kaimur mountain range I, is covered with many waterfalls and one of them is the Telhar Pond Waterfall. It is about 80 m high and the tourists are thrilled to see the water falling from the height of 80 m. The main water source of the Kund is the golden river derived from Kharga (Dumbur).
- **Karakatgarh (Chainpur) Waterfalls:** Situated in the Kaimur mountain range, this water fall spreads the dazzling shade of the beauty. It is located in the Chainpur block which is adjacent to the border of Uttar Pradesh.

HOW TO REACH



The temple can be reached by road via *Patna*, *Gaya* or *Varanasi*. The nearest railway station is *Mohania – Bhabua Road* railway station from where the temple is about 22 km. by road. *Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport*, Varanasi is the nearest airport, located at a distance of 102 km. from the temple. Indian carriers like, Air India, Spicejet, and international carriers like Air India, Thai Airways International, Korean Airways operate from here. Daily flights to Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata are available from here.



MAKING POWERFUL AI MORE ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE

Waterloo researchers develop highly efficient AI training system that paves the way for cheaper, greener “intelligent partners”

By: Media Relations, *University of Waterloo*



Engineering master's student Nayeema Nonta (left), one of the three paper authors, and her supervisor, Dr. Sirisha Rambhatla, in a large server room with the computer power needed to develop their new LLM training technique. (University of Waterloo)

A much faster, more efficient training method developed at the University of Waterloo could help put powerful artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the hands of many more people by reducing the cost and environmental impact of building them.

Large language models (LLMs) are advanced AI systems designed to understand and generate human language by learning patterns in how words and ideas are connected from massive amounts of text in books, articles and websites.

Teaching them to do that now requires months of work and huge quantities of computational power, specialized hardware and electricity, making the costs of development prohibitive to all but large corporations and organizations.

Researchers at Waterloo set out over a year to make the technology cheaper, greener and therefore more accessible — a goal they refer to as ‘democratization’ — by combining and building on previous efforts to improve training.

The result is SubTrack++, a technique that speeds up pre-training of LLM models — the first and most costly, resource-intensive step in a multi-step process — by up to 50 per cent, while still exceeding state-of-the-art performance in terms of accuracy.

“These are extremely large models

which consume a lot of energy, so an improvement of even five per cent translates into big gains,” said Dr. Sirisha Rambhatla, a professor of management science and engineering at Waterloo. “Advances like these will help us all build our own LLMs in the long run.”

The project also contributes fresh thinking on responsible and accessible AI to Waterloo’s Global Futures initiative, which looks to advance innovations to address the world’s most pressing challenges.

LLMs are neural networks comprised of vast numerical matrices that learn through trial and error from billions of examples how to predict the next word in a sequence. Each time an LLM makes a mistake, it slightly adjusts its mathematical parameters to improve accuracy.

“In simple terms, training is like letting the model read an entire library and learn how people use language by recognizing patterns in words and ideas,” said Sahar Rajabi, a PhD student who led the study.

SubTrack++ accelerates both pre-training to establish a basic foundation and fine-tuning for a specific task by essentially focusing on the most important parameters of a model to simplify the correction process.

Rambhatla, director of the Critical Machine Learning (ML) Lab at Waterloo,

compares the highly technical approach to using a map of a mountain, rather than its actual physical features, to plot the quickest route to climb it.

Researchers expect faster, cheaper training for LLMs — which are now capable of such functions as drafting emails and reports — to make it possible and affordable for ordinary people, not just large companies, to build and customize powerful tools of their own.

“By safely learning from personal preferences, LLMs could act as truly personal digital assistants that adapt to each person’s style, goals and needs,” Rajabi said. “Future models may become intelligent partners in human work and creativity.”

Rambhatla’s work on researching more efficient AI systems aligns with and contributes to the broader research efforts underway at Waterloo. Dr. Juan Moreno-Cruz, a professor in the Faculty of Environment at Waterloo, recently published a research paper that found U.S. AI power usage has a minimal effect on global greenhouse gas emissions.

Researchers are scheduled to present a paper on the new training method, SubTrack++ : Gradient Subspace Tracking for Scalable LLM Training, at the upcoming Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS 2025) in Mexico City.

Breaking the Ice: “Heated Rivalry” Brings a New Edge to Sports Television



Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie in *Heated Rivalry*, premiering on Crave in Canada Nov. 28

Sports dramas have long relied on familiar themes of competition, discipline and personal sacrifice. With *Heated Rivalry*, however, the genre takes an unexpected and provocative turn. The Canadian series, created by Jacob Tierney and based on Rachel Reid’s bestselling *Game Changers* novels, blends the intensity of professional hockey with a deeply personal romantic storyline, resulting in one of the most talked-about television releases of the year.

Set in the world of elite men’s hockey, *Heated Rivalry* centres on

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, star players on rival teams whose public antagonism conceals a long-running private relationship. Over six episodes, the series charts their evolving connection across several seasons, using their on-ice rivalry as a counterpoint to the emotional vulnerability they share away from public view.

What distinguishes *Heated Rivalry* from conventional sports dramas is its decision to place an intimate, same-sex relationship at the heart of the narrative without treating it as a

side plot or social issue to be resolved. Instead, the series presents Shane and Ilya’s romance as complex, imperfect and emotionally driven — shaped as much by ambition and pride as by affection.

The performances by Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie anchor the series. Williams brings restraint and quiet conflict to Shane, whose struggle lies in balancing his need for control with his fear of exposure. Storrie’s Ilya, by contrast, is more impulsive and emotionally transparent, often pushing against

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Breaking the Ice:

“Heated Rivalry” Brings a New Edge to Sports Television

the limits of secrecy imposed by their careers. Together, the actors establish a believable chemistry that carries the show through both its quieter character moments and its more confrontational scenes.

Visually, *Heated Rivalry* benefits from confident direction and strong production values. The hockey sequences are filmed with kinetic energy, capturing the speed and aggression of the sport without overwhelming the story. In contrast, the private moments between the protagonists are shot with intimacy and restraint, allowing emotional tension to build through performance rather than exposition.

One of the most discussed aspects of the series has been its explicit portrayal of intimacy. Unlike many television dramas that imply relationships through suggestion, *Heated Rivalry* depicts physical closeness directly and unapologetically. This creative choice has generated both praise and criticism. Supporters argue that the series offers a rare depiction of queer relationships that does not shy away from desire or tenderness. Critics, meanwhile, have questioned whether the emphasis on sexual content occasionally overshadows character development.

Tierney has addressed this debate by emphasizing fidelity to the source material and the importance of representing queer relationships with the same narrative freedom afforded to heterosexual ones. In a television landscape where LGBTQ+ characters are often framed through trauma or marginalisation, *Heated Rivalry* presents intimacy as a natural and integral part of its characters’ lives.

Beyond romance, the series also touches on broader themes within professional sport, including media scrutiny, public image and the unspoken expectations placed on athletes. While these elements are not explored exhaustively, they provide



Connor Storrie in *Heated Rivalry*, premiering on Crave in Canada Nov. 28



Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie in *Heated Rivalry*, premiering on Crave in Canada Nov. 28

useful context and raise questions about visibility and authenticity in environments traditionally resistant to change. Audience response has been strong, with the series attracting high viewership and active discussion across social media platforms. Viewers have praised its emotional honesty and character-driven storytelling, while industry observers note its significance as a Canadian production gaining international attention. The show’s early renewal for a second season reflects both its commercial success and its cultural resonance.

Heated Rivalry may not appeal

to all viewers, particularly those expecting a conventional sports narrative. Its focus is less on wins and losses than on the private costs of ambition and the complexities of love under pressure. Yet it is precisely this shift in emphasis that makes the series noteworthy.

As television continues to evolve, *Heated Rivalry* stands as an example of how familiar genres can be reimagined. By combining sport, romance and identity with confidence and clarity, the series opens new ground — not only for queer storytelling, but for sports drama as a whole.



Toronto's Restaurant Industry Warns of Growing Shortage of Skilled Chefs

Toronto's vibrant restaurant scene, long celebrated for its diversity and culinary creativity, is facing a growing challenge behind the scenes: a shortage of skilled chefs. Industry professionals warn that without urgent action, the lack of trained culinary talent could threaten the quality, sustainability and global reputation of the city's food sector.

Restaurant owners, executive chefs and hospitality associations across the Greater Toronto Area say the demand for experienced chefs has surged sharply since the post-pandemic recovery, while the supply of qualified professionals has failed to keep pace. From fine-dining establishments to neighbourhood eateries, kitchens are struggling to recruit chefs with the technical skills, discipline and long-term commitment required for today's demanding restaurant environment.

"Toronto has no shortage of restaurants, but we absolutely have a shortage of chefs who are properly trained and prepared for the realities of the job," said one veteran executive chef who has worked in the city for more than two decades. "Cooking on television and social media looks glamorous, but professional kitchens require stamina, teamwork and years of hands-on training."

Industry leaders point to several factors contributing to the problem. The COVID-19 pandemic forced thousands of hospitality workers to leave the industry altogether, many of whom have not returned. Long hours, rising living costs in Toronto and limited entry-level wages have made it difficult to attract young talent to the profession.



Chefs working in a busy Toronto restaurant kitchen. Industry leaders say the city is facing a shortage of skilled culinary professionals.

At the same time, restaurant professionals say there is a widening gap between culinary education and real-world kitchen demands. While culinary schools provide theoretical knowledge, employers argue that more apprenticeship-style training is needed to prepare chefs for high-pressure service environments.

"There needs to be stronger collaboration between culinary institutions and restaurants," said a restaurant owner operating multiple locations downtown. "We need chefs who understand food costs, kitchen management and consistency, not just creativity."

Immigration has historically played a vital role in sustaining Toronto's culinary workforce, particularly in specialized cuisines. However, restaurateurs say delays in work permits and tighter labour policies have made it harder to bring in experienced international chefs.

The shortage is already having visible effects. Some restaurants have reduced operating hours, simplified menus or delayed

expansion plans due to staffing limitations. Others are increasing wages and benefits to retain talent, driving up operational costs that may ultimately be passed on to customers.

Despite the challenges, industry professionals remain optimistic that solutions are within reach. Calls are growing for expanded apprenticeship programs, targeted immigration pathways for skilled chefs, and greater public recognition of culinary careers as viable, respected professions.

"Chefs are the backbone of this industry," said a representative from a hospitality association. "If Toronto wants to remain a world-class food city, we must invest in developing and retaining culinary talent now."

As Toronto's dining scene continues to evolve, professionals agree that addressing the chef shortage is no longer optional but essential to preserving the city's reputation as one of North America's most exciting culinary destinations.

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DISCOVER THE ISLE OF WIGHT



The Isle of Wight is an island off the south coast of England which, together with its surrounding uninhabited islets and skerries, is also a ceremonial county. The county is bordered by Hampshire across the Solent strait to the north, and is otherwise surrounded by the English Channel. Its largest settlement is Ryde, and the administrative centre is Newport.

The Isle of Wight has a land area of 380 km² (150 sq mi) and had a population of 140,794 in 2022, making it the largest and second-most populous English island.

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