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VANAKKAM

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NATAL TAMIL VEDIC SOCIETY TRUST

SA Tamil Centre for Creative Arts & Culture



- South African Tamil Heritage Centre • Institute for the Advancement of Tamil
- Schools of Tamil Language, Music & Dance • International Tamil Network



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CONTENT

Religion Bashing: A Swiss Solution	Pg 02
Indian Women Trailblazers	Pg 04
Sustaining The Love And Perpetuation Of Tamil	Pg 06
Saivism: An Overview	Pg 12
Tamil Pioneers - Panumathie Muthukrishna	Pg 16
Indian Arrival Day: South Africa	Pg 18
The "Ever" Green Temple	Pg 22
Farewell Dr Pather	Pg 25
Navarathri	Pg 26



EDITORIAL TEAM:

Guest Editor Dr J Pather,
Craig Esbend *of SA Suburbs*



Cover Image
Europaplatz Multipurpose Center
/ House of Religions | Bauart

Religion Bashing: A Swiss Solution



by Jagadesan Pather (Guest Editor)

As we all know, Switzerland is a neutral country. In keeping with its ethos, the Swiss have accommodated all major religions under one roof. This innovation is proving very successful and could be a model for other countries.

The structure, situated in Berne, called THE HOUSE OF RELIGIONS, serves as a catalyst for dialogues of the various cultures in Switzerland: Under one roof eight religions congregate, simultaneously or individually. Turkish (Alevites), Christian, Islam, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, Baha'i, and Buddhist. It is a miracle that eight faiths observe their different rituals about life and the afterlife and practise in harmony in one edifice (a mosque, a synagogue, a temple, a Dergha, a Buddhist centre and a church are successfully used by eight different communities, regularly. The driving force behind the project was a Moravian priest, an Imam and a Rabbi. These men shared a dream of co-existence among religions. Despite initial negativism and objections from many quarters, faith ruled supreme and today the House of Religions leads the way for replication.

A SHARED DREAM: A SEED NOW BLOOMS & PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE BECOMES A REALITY

The design features a shared common area for all the communities with conference rooms, a library, and a restaurant.

The estimated number of Sri Lankans in Switzerland currently is between 46,000 and 55,000: these are expatriates who fled the island's civil war.

Architect: Erich Guggisberg

Temple Master Builder: Purushotman Kaliaperumal (from Tamil Nadu)

Dimension: 5800m²

Cost: Approx 1 500 00 S/francs

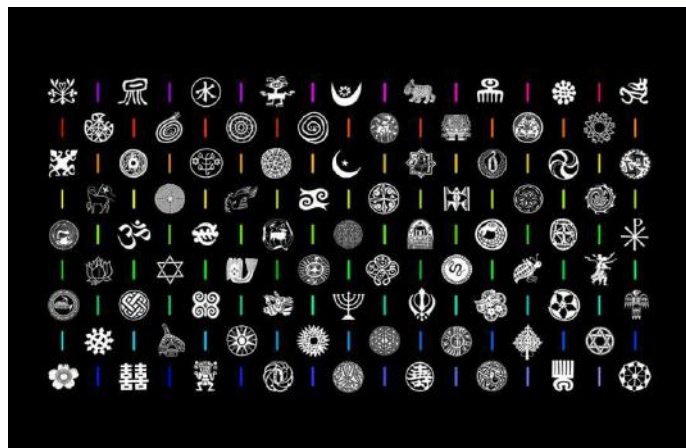
Volunteer work: 3000 working hours

Location: Europlatz, 3008 Berne, Switzerland

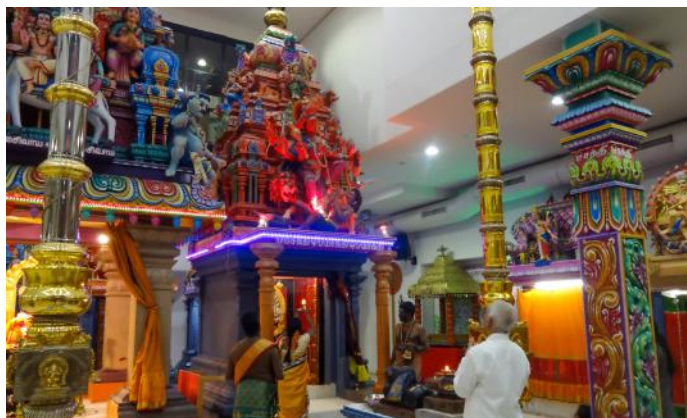
www.saiverikoodam.co.za



Swissinfo: Ch



A Panel Of Religious Symbols



***Interior Of The House
Of Religions: Indian Temple***



***Buddhist Prayer Centre in
the House of Religions***

Indian Women —Trailblazers—



***Captain Kavistha Maharaj in The
Cockpit Of A Boeing 737***

KAVISTHA Maharaj, of Kempton Park on the East Rand, is flying high.

The former Newcastle, northern KwaZulu-Natal, go-getter is the first Indian South African female captain at South African Airways (SAA). Maharaj, 38, a pilot with SAA since 1999, said she was living her dream.

“I had a desire for adventure and travel ever since I was a little girl. SAA allowed me to fulfil my dream and the lifestyle I craved. I was recruited into its cadet pilot training programme in 1995. The course was done in two phases, six months in South Africa and 15 months at the Australian Aviation College. I graduated in March 1997”.

“I flew the Boeing 737 and the Airbus 340 as co-pilot before I was promoted to captain of the Boeing 747.

“I fly regularly between Gauteng, where I am based, to Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania and other African countries,” said Maharaj”.

The mother of one said being an airline pilot is not just a career, but a lifestyle. “It is a very rewarding lifestyle that demands dedication, passion and discipline. I have no problem juggling my time between my career, motherhood, family, and friends. It takes perseverance, lots of sweat and determination,” said Maharaj. “*During my free time, I visit the gym.*”

Maharaj said she hoped that other women would follow in her footsteps.

“In days gone by becoming lawyers, doctors and teachers were popular career choices. Back then having an Indian woman pilot, let alone a captain, was unheard of.”

Reference: Pressreader.com

SA's FIRST INDIAN FEMALE MEDICAL DOCTOR

Dr. Kesaveloo Goonaruthnum Naidoo

(Dr Goonam: the “Coolie Doctor”) 1906 -1999



Dr. Kesaveloo Goonaruthnum Naidoo was born in 1906 in Durban. She grew up in Grey Street, with three brothers and three sisters. Along with her siblings, she attended the Tamil school called Sathia Gnana Sabhai before attending English school. At the young age of 11, she became a pupil teacher, earning a salary of 10 shillings. Her parents, R.K. Naidoo and Thangatchee Naidoo, were well connected in Natal; as a result, she grew up amidst prominent Indian people such as M.K. Gandhi, Monty Naicker, Srinivasa Sastri and M.L. Sultan.

She was bright, ambitious, and independent; so eventually her father was persuaded to allow her to train as a medical doctor. As there was no medical school open to Indian women in South Africa, she went to Scotland on 8 March 1928 to study at Edinburgh University.

On her return, Dr. Goonam joined the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and was one of the main organizers of the passive resistance campaign of 1946.

This campaign protested against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act or “Ghetto Act” which limited the land available to Indians and restricted their franchise. She led the second batch of resisters on 22 June 1946.

She was a committed, fearless political activist. On 29 June 1946, Dr. Goonam was sentenced to six months with hard labour, in addition, to the sentence under the Riotous Assemblies Act. However, after four months the sentence was suspended. In total, Dr. Goonam was imprisoned 17 times for her political activities and is considered one of the pioneers of female Indian resistance.

The constant harassment by the security police prompted her to flee to England, where she remained in exile.

Reference:
Enwikipedia
SA Historyonline

SUSTAINING THE LOVE AND PERPETUATION OF TAMIL - AN EXPATRIATE'S PERSPECTIVE

WORLD TAMIL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

A Presentation by Solomon Parthasarthy Pillay



I am Solomon Parthasarthy Pillay, a third-generation Thamizhan, born in South Africa, with my grandparents having come from Pallavarum, Chengelpet and Salem in the late 1890s. For those who may not know, the first arrival of Dravidians into South Africa dates back to around 1652 when they came into South Africa as slaves. There were also waves of migration of South Indians who came in as gold miners to the Johannesburg areas. Then, as recorded in history, we were brought in as indentured labourers to work on the British sugar plantations from 1860. In terms of this history of indentured labour, the first ship, called Belvedere, left Calcutta with North

Indians, picked up more people from Bihar and then Madras, and many disembarked along the route in Reunion, Seychelles, Mauritius and then Durban. The second ship, the SS Truro left after the Belvedere but arrived first in South Africa. Tamils came from the districts of Trichy, Madurai, Ramnad, Salem, Tanjore, and Chengelpet and the majority from North and South Arcot. In South Africa, we are one of the two largest settlements of Tamils outside of India. Between 1860 and 1911, 384 ships brought South Indians, which included a large number of 'Passenger Indians'. Lamentably, the story that has not been adequately recorded in history is the story of the contribution of South Indians to the emancipation struggle in South Africa. We are the only expatriate population of Indians that fought side by side with the indigenous people of their adopted country for political emancipation and freedom.

Even Gandhiji had praised the role of Tamils in the Satyagraha movement in our country – notably of people like South African-born Valliammah Mudaliar, feted in India also as a Martyr of the South African struggle, who died just after being released from prison as a political prisoner at the age of 18.

As a member of a population that left India almost 2 centuries ago, I would like to offer a perspective of an expatriate or Diaspora population struggling to keep our beautiful language and culture alive and relevant.

It is a well-known fact, as praised by many around the world, that the language of Tamil is one of the oldest and greatest living classical languages in the world. There is a good reason why Western Universities such as Harvard, have a seat for Tamil in their University offerings. However, while the first and second generations of South Africans of Indian descent spoke Tamil fluently, largely being taught by parents, the newer generations born from about the fifties have almost lost their affiliation to Tamil as a spoken language. At best, many understand the spoken Tamil in spurts.

My humble view is that we have to be candid about the continuation and sustenance of the spoken Tamil, especially in the Diaspora outside of India. Sadly, Tamil is fast becoming an almost forgotten spoken language as most people even the older generation in expatriate countries are speaking in English, invariably the language for survival and success. This is an unfortunate, but realistic appraisal of the situation. In South Africa and Mauritius for example, while people proudly declare that they are Tamil, they speak little or no Tamil – largely because in these countries we are third and fourth-generation Tamils. While this unfortunate scenario prevails, it should however, not deter us as the promoters and the protagonists of the Tamil language, to convert the objective of entrenching the spoken Tamil language, to an objective of inculcating the appreciation of Tamil culture. I believe that the promotion and expression of the greatness of our culture will be more easily absorbed and entrenched than expecting our people to speak the Tamil language. Among other things, let “Iyal, Isai, Nadagam” become our clarion call.

We need to develop a strategy that demonstrates the greatness of Tamil culture born out of the Tamil language, together with the ethos of our origin and early existence. It should not be difficult to do that when you explore the successes of Tamilians throughout the world. The ethos of our Tamil existence is unique and very different from the ethos of most other groups within India. We’ve always been a very humble people - perhaps too humble sometimes - we have always been a resourceful, hard-working, tolerant, persevering population with an overbearing passion for education – the passion sometimes bordering on an obsession.

But that was our strength more than our weakness. There's a good reason why most of the IT intellectual capital around the world came from the South of India. There's a good reason why many top companies around the world have South Indians at the helm of their billion Dollar Companies. There is a good reason why many of our University Academics and Medical Professionals are of South Indian origin. This is the pride that we should continue to promote in our quest to keep alive and foster our Tamilness.

In the expatriate world, our attempt to flog an, unfortunately, dying horse for speaking the Tamil language runs the risk of destroying the entire stable. So, while we would love to have the spoken language perpetuated, we must be realistic and practical that it is not going to be sustained. Therefore, in the pursuit of this objective of developing the language, we should not run the risk of losing the total appreciation of the Tamil culture – lest we face the sad possibility of extinction in the Diaspora. I am one of perhaps ten per cent of our Tamil population in South Africa who reads and writes fluently in Tamil. I am 70 years young next month, and many of those proficient Tamil Scholars are around my age. In a decade or two, that percentage will reduce drastically.

In expatriate communities, the younger generation is facing the additional challenges of the dilution of their Tamil identities as there is an increasing tendency for inter-linguistic marriages. The natural progression of this dilution is eventually the renunciation of this beautiful culture. So where should we go from here and how should we address this issue that confronts us? Perhaps one strategy is that we should stop focusing on ancient literature and writings as a basis for our appreciation of the culture. While we must always embrace the foundations of our history and literature in some way, we need to focus on more relevant writings, modern philosophies and current achievements - something that the younger generation can relate to and something that would stem and halt the conscious and unconscious abdication of our Tamil existence by the younger generation. Just consider the gravitation of the younger generation to people like Sadguru – and this will offer a cue as to what the younger generation yearns for.

As this younger generation integrates increasingly into the dominant Western culture, something needs to be done to significantly harness the pride of being Tamil-Thamizh Perumai. It has to start with the pride of affiliation – where they can always proudly proclaim their Tamil origin and existence. While we embrace the teachings of the old, let us be selective about what we extoll as the strength of our culture. For example, the work of Thiruvallavur in the Thirukkural should not be perceived as the Tamil Bible – a perception that prevails in most Western environments. The Thirukkural stands as one of the greatest treatise written anywhere in the world, transcending race, religion and creed.



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Varaluxmi Virutham INITIATIVE



It is a treatise on virtually every aspect of life and it must be promoted as a Universal masterpiece. It was relevant in his time, and it is indisputably still relevant now. This should be a special source of pride among the younger modern and educated generation that such a treatise was written by a Thamizhan. Indeed, the Thirukkural should be their modern compass and guidance manual for their developing ambitions and the vagaries of life.

Let us look around at all of us today - candidly and honestly, we are mostly over 50s, 60s and 70s. Why does the younger generation not wholeheartedly embrace and affiliate with such events? To most of the younger generation, we are the fossils trying to lead and motivate the young Turks, using our traditional and sometimes antiquated persuasions. While these persuasions were relevant and significant during our time, this relevance is diminishing in the modern Tamil world. How many people of the younger generation do we have in our Tamil movements - partly because many of us want to hold on to power and continue holding the reigns of authority? Our generation should never be relegated, but we should also actively co-opt and integrate the newer generation into our structures.

Many of us can't think as a modern young person. We therefore need to seriously incorporate their perspectives, designs and desires into our strategies for survival. We have to slowly let go of the reigns while we hover around in the background to ensure that we do not suffer a total renunciation.

As a critical means to an end, let us also candidly assess the role of the Tamil Nadu Government in this process of the propagation and perpetuation of our beautiful Tamil culture. With the greatest respect - should they not be more actively involved in assisting especially Diaspora populations in upholding and promoting the culture? There are thousands of our people from just South Africa alone, that come to the Motherland and Tamil Nadu every year. They come to the Temples, Hill Stations and other places of interest, in the process pouring hundreds of millions of rupees into the economy of this region. Our older expatriate people still have emotional bonds to Tamil Nadu and I respectfully submit that I do not believe the Tamil Nadu government has considered it in those terms - it provides more than a commercial justification to actively invest in Tamil Cultural propagation in the Diasporas. While we had visits of Tamil Icons like TMS in the past and Sid Sriram more recently, these Concerts were unfortunately too expensive for the rank and file to attend. We need the Government's support to address this deficiency. Respectfully again, there should at least be some small contribution to ensuring that this beautiful culture stays vibrant and relevant in expatriate populations.

To use Dr Sampath's legalese, the jury is still out on who should be the pivotal custodian for the development and perpetuation of the Tamil Language internationally. There is a body of opinion that states that the Government of Tamil Nadu should play some important and increasing role in that process. It should be in this Government's interest that the beautiful culture continues to inspire and appeal to people who reside away from the Motherland. This has a mutual benefit in encouraging more regular visits to Tamil Nadu. While there is some degree of support from the National and State Governments through local Consulates in South Africa where they used to fund Tamil classes, this is sadly on a relatively miniscule scale. As a start, we would like to see a very user-friendly and interactive conversational Tamil tutoring programme which will be greatly welcomed by many thousands who still have the desire to learn the spoken language. My wish list includes creating a serene Thamizh Retreat in a rural setting in South Africa – where Thamizhans of all economic classes can gather for the propagation, engagement and appreciation of all dimensions of Tamil – learning Bharatya Natyam, fostering the language through films, the performance of Yoga, learning Music, hosting visiting Tamil Luminaries and personalities, among other objectives.

The majority of us Thamizhans in South Africa still love and identify with this beautiful Culture. A Tamil Music Group called Agniswaram, which I created, is still vibrantly involved in regular Concerts of Tamil Devotional singing throughout the year, at different Temples and Venues.

Not a single musician here was trained in India. And I am completely self-taught as a Singer. This serves to demonstrate the passion that most of us still have for the music and culture of Tamil, even though we suffered a lengthy Cultural boycott by India during the Apartheid years.

In conclusion, I understand that I have presented a perspective that may not be wholly embraced by language purists and pundits. However, in any reformation and rejuvenation process, we need to first make candid assessments of the prevailing terrain, even if they make us uncomfortable in its wake. My heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the Madras Development Society for the honour bestowed on me today, which I carry proudly on behalf of all Tamil Cultural Activists in South Africa. For me personally, while they have taken me out of Tamil Nadu, they can never take the Tamil out of me. Unashamedly and indisputably, my Tamil heart beats louder than my Western heart. Vaazhge Thamizh Mozhi Vaazhge.



SAIVISM

an overview



By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Before looking at the tenets of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, it will be useful to understand Saiva Siddhanta's place in the broader context of Hinduism.

Hinduism's Four Denominations

We will start by looking at Hinduism's primary denominations. There are four of them: Saivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism.

Hinduism can thus be described as a family of religions with four principal denominations. This idea is not always grasped by academics some of whom wrote incorrectly that Hindus have no Supreme God. The way I like to express this idea is that all Hindus believe in one Supreme Being. They just don't agree on the name or nature of that Supreme Being!

For Vaishnavites, Lord Vishnu is God. For Saivites, God is Siva. For Shaktas, Goddess Shakti is supreme. For Smartas, who are the most liberal Hindus, the choice of Deity is left to the devotee.

These four denominations exist in India in different geographical and linguistic regions. Each has its own beliefs, scriptures, religious leaders and monistic** traditions. Each has its temples, festivals and ways of worship. Some are more focused on devotion and temple worship. Others stress yoga, mantra and scriptural study. Each has hundreds of millions of followers. All four accept the authority of the Vedas and the basic beliefs of karma, dharma and reincarnation. Much of their culture and tradition is the same.

****EDITOR:**

“What is monistic?: a broad definition: a philosophy is monistic if it postulates unity of the origin of all things; all existing things return to a source that is distinct from them (Wikipedia).

Saivism

Next, we can look in more detail at the denomination of Saivism. The University of Madras’s Tamil Lexicon gives this description: “Saivam: The religion which regards Siva as the Supreme Being and is exclusively devoted to His worship”.

Saivism is the world’s oldest religion. Worshipping God Siva, the compassionate One, stresses potent disciplines, high philosophy, the guru’s centrality and the path of bhakti and raja yoga, leading to oneness with Siva within. Saivism is ancient, truly ageless, for it has no beginning. It is the precursor of the many-faceted religion now termed Hinduism. Scholars trace the roots of Siva worship back more than 8,000 years to the advanced Indus Valley civilization. But sacred writings inform us that there never was a time when Saivism did not exist. There are six schools of philosophy and tradition within Saivism: Saiva Siddhanta, Kashmir Saivism, Pashupata Saivism, Vira Saivism, Siva Advaita and Siddha Siddhanta. They differ in many ways, philosophically, historically, linguistically and geographically. Still, they share an overwhelming similarity of belief and practice. In addition to the Vedas, the Saiva Agamas are the shared scriptures of all six schools. All six identify Siva as the Supreme Lord, both immanent and transcendent, worshipped as the personal Lord and realized through meditation as the Absolute, Parasiva, beyond all form.



Saiva Siddhanta

And finally, we can look at the Saiva Siddhanta School of philosophy. It is today the oldest, most vigorous and widely practised of the six schools of Saivism. It has many millions of devotees, tens of thousands of active temples and dozens of living monastic and ascetic traditions. Saiva Siddhanta once enjoyed a glorious presence throughout India. Today it is strongest within the Tamil traditions of South India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, South Africa and elsewhere. It is sometimes referred to simply as Tamil Saivism. The term Saiva Siddhanta means “the final, or established, conclusions of Saivism.” Today there are two primary schools of Saiva Siddhanta. One is the pluralistic school of Meykandar, which holds that God, the soul and the world are eternally separate.

The other is the monistic school of Tirumular which is called Shuddha Saiva Siddhanta and stresses the ultimate oneness of man and God. For both schools, Siva is all, and His divine manifests energy, Shakti, is inseparable from Him. In temples we often see Siva and Shakti enshrined as two separate beings, a divine couple, but in truth, they are one. We worship Ganesha and Murugan as great Lords who serve their creator, God Siva. We chant the holy mantra Namah Sivaya. We wear rudraksha beads and holy ash. We revere the many Saivite saints. We believe it is necessary to have a living guru. We cherish the holy Sivalinga, keep company (Sangam) with other devout seekers, and revere the great many Siva temples. These four—Guru, Lingam, Sangam (fellowship) and Valipadu (worship)—are the essence of Saiva Siddhanta as found in ancient Sanskrit and Tamil literature.

EDITOR:
*The above are
the views of
the writer*



CLAIRWOOD

THE UNTOLD STORY

By Dr J Pather

CLAIRWOOD

THE UNTOLD STORY

JUGGIE PATHER PhD

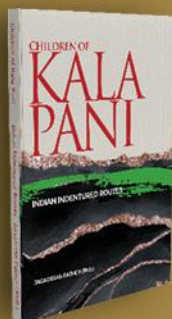


From this first generation of semi-slaves, Clairwood is proud to have produced several judges (one an internationally recognised jurist). These politicians were involved in the national struggle for freedom, professors, musicians, sportsmen, and eminent leaders in commerce, industry, education and medicine. An outstanding quality was the selflessness of the leaders and the spirit of camaraderie that went beyond religion or race...

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**Check Out His
Other Book**



Panumathie Muthukrishna (Pam)

**1st Indian Female to
qualify as an Attorney in SA**

In the mid-1950s, Indian women in South Africa were making remarkable strides in various professions (Indian Opinion 1957).



Proof of this is Miss Panumathie Muthukrishna (Pam), a BA graduate from Stanger, Natal, who passed the attorney's admission examination at the University of South Africa.

Miss Krishna's story is one of patience and perseverance. She wrote the matriculation examination at a Port Shepstone Convent and thereafter completed all her studies on a part-time basis. In 1957 (Indian Opinion: 1957), she was admitted as an attorney becoming the role model for many Indian women who became legal practitioners. She practised in Stanger, KwaZulu Natal.

Family background

The Muthukrishna family: George Muthukrishna (9 August 1855- June 1917), was the first Muthukrishna to arrive in South Africa from Colombo, then Ceylon in 1881. In the 1920s, there were 6 generations of the Muthukrishna family in South Africa. Purshotman Muthukrishna served as the attorney to Chief Albert Luthuli, President-General of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1952.

Pam is the daughter of Mr R Muthukrishna, who was a conveyancing clerk at Port Shepstone. His four children had done remarkably well in various professions. One son, to whom Pam was articled, was a lawyer who practised in Stanger, another was a principal of a school in Port Shepstone and the fourth was an electrical engineer in Yorkshire, England.

REFERENCES:

Indian Opinion, 4(LV), p. 41. Friday, 1st February 1957
Chettiar, Saths: January 18, 2018

Indian Arrival Day: South Africa



by Jagadesan Pather (Guest Editor)

On board an indenture ship (Google.co.za)

Soon 1.7 million Indians will be observing and celebrating Indian Arrival Day or S.A Indian Heritage Day. It is a significant day on our calendar. Whilst we celebrate the past, it must be remembered that the past, the present and the future are seamless and form a single continuum.

It must also be remembered that the further we are removed from the travails and successes of approximately 152,184 Indentured Indians who arrived in (Port Natal) Durban harbour from Calcutta and Chennai, between 1860 – 1912, the less we recollect the trauma our forebears suffered. Therefore, we must set aside time to remember and actively participate in our shared history, by marking 16th November in red. ***For those who did not visit the 1860 Heritage Centre in Derby Street, Durban, you should do so as you are missing a panoramic visual treat of South African Indian heritage.***

All in all, our forebears made 384 trips until the iniquitous 5-year bonded labour or indenture system ended. Many had to extend their contracts for another 5 years as the savings from their paltry wages were insufficient to pay for a return ticket to India.

Initially, the onboard death rate was very high, eg., the Belvedere, the second ship to arrive from India, carrying 342 passengers saw 29 deaths. Even after landing, another 10 died soon after. Death on board the ship transporting the indentured was a common occurrence. So was the abuse of female passengers. The first ship, the Truro arrived on 16 November 1860 and the last ship, the Umlazi arrived on 11 July 1911, marking the end of the notorious system of indenture.



Child Labour: Google.com

Whilst South Africans have a fairly good knowledge of local indenture history, there is a need to study a parallel history of the Indian diaspora between 1834 and 1912. The well-researched and illustrated book by Jagadesan Pather: ***Children of Kala Pani: Indian Indenture Routes***, is a study of 1.3 million Indians who were transported to 21 countries between 1834 and 1912. Their poignant struggles and the daily running of the gauntlet, abuse of child labour, sexual abuse of women, ignoring of contractual obligations, being held captive on the plantations, deprivation of workers of medical care, being punished for minor misdemeanours, and unfair reduction of wages or rations, and more are vividly recorded in Pather's book.



Visitors at the 1860 Heritage Centre

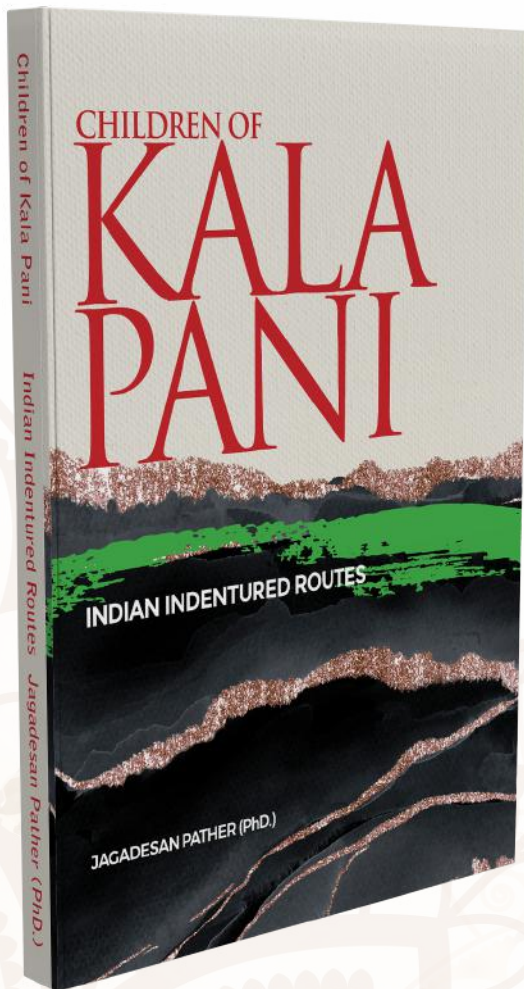


Child Labour: Google.com



Plantation workers (Museum of London.org.uk)

The following is a peek into the book, **Children of Kala Pani:**



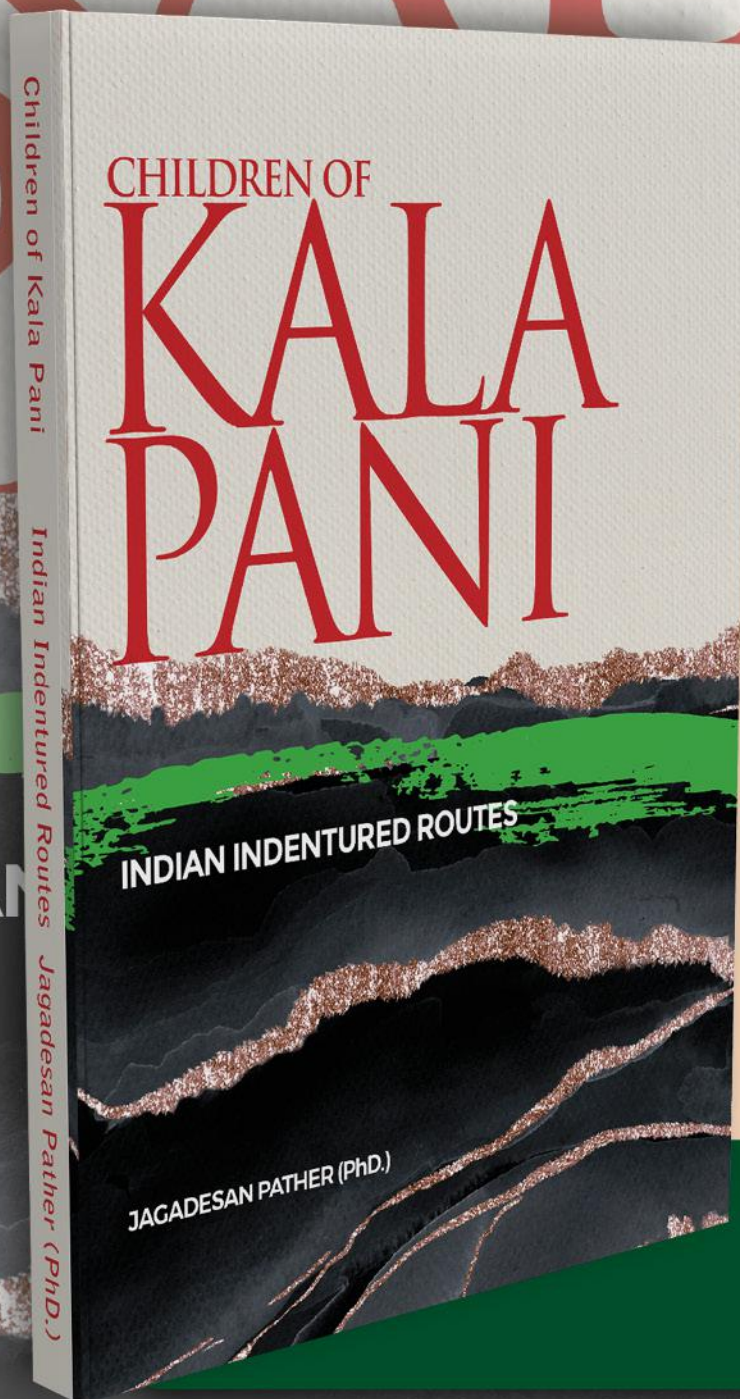
The tumultuous, precarious crossing of the seas, huddled in the dark claustrophobic bowels of sailing ships previously used to transport slaves, the eventual arrival on foreign shores, and the culture shock are a metaphor for pangs of childbirth: hence the title, *Children of Kala Pani*. For the majority of Girmitiyas who remained in the colonies never to set foot on their homeland again, it was akin to severing the umbilical cord. Children were also born on board during the voyages. The death of many workers on the ocean journeys and in the sugar plantations resonates with mothers' deaths during childbirth as experienced onboard and in the plantations. • *Kala Pani* in Hindi means black waters. It's metaphorical in the sense that as against sea blue or sea green ocean "black waters" is ominous, foreboding, sinister; as it was an unknown journey, perceptions of oceans "infested with demons and serpents" deeply troubled the recruits. • The fear of crossing the oceans also originated from the belief that it meant the end of a cycle as the traveller was cut off from the regenerating waters of the Ganges. Such voyages also meant "breaking family and social ties" (Wikipedia). Moreover, it not only results in the contamination and defilement of the essence of Hinduism, but also results in the loss of caste, class, and societal rejection resulting in the compromise of every core of Hinduism (MEHTA, B. J: 2010).

***This book is available from Yatin, 1860 Heritage Centre
(031 3091858 & Deeanum: 073 254 6482: Westcliff)***

CHILDREN OF

KALA PANI

By Dr J Pather



Indian Indentured Routes honours all those Indians who made the perilous journey with meagre resources, to unknown distant lands to become the forebears of thousands who are still contributing to the development of what were the previous colonies of the British, French, Dutch and Danish.

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THE “EVER” GREEN TEMPLE



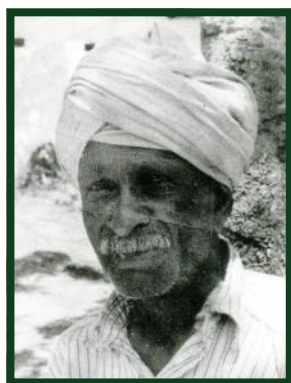
Shree Gengaiamm Temple (Green Temple- Cato Manor)

“More than a century ago, a Gengaiamm temple was built at the lower end of Booth Road on the banks of the Umkumbaan River, popularly known as First River. It was constructed of reeds and hay. Unfortunately, the temple was washed away in the floods of 1905 and a new structure was built further along the river bank. This site was ideal, being on a major road junction and, therefore, right in the heart of the Indian community”.
<https://www.catomanorhindutemple.co.za/>

While the 103-year-old Shree Gengaiamm Temple is small, it has a massive following of devotees who attend the daily prayers and annual festivals.

The green temple is situated on Old Bellair Road (opposite the Nkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital) and is one of the oldest and most recognised temples in the country. The temple was built by South Africa’s pioneer Indians and of particular interest is that the modest structure was built around a sacred anthill (Referred to as “Puthoo” by Tamils).

Background: The temple's history begins with one 16-year-old, Thambooran Gounden, who hailed from India in 1879 as an indentured labourer. He chose to live and work in the Cato Manor area. Ten years on he noticed an anthill or Puthoo. It was an old Tamil custom to see the divine in a Puthoo. Thus, the locals followed tradition to erect a temporary shelter for the village deity around the anthill. Twenty years later, circa 1909, a wood and iron structure replaced the bamboo and hay temple. Thereafter, the villagers planted "rasamara" and "aalamaram" trees flanking the temple. These trees had a special significance in the worship of the mother goddesses.



The first priest of the temple was Poojali Moonsamy Govender. According to an article in the newspaper, Chatsworth Sun, the temple's first constitution was signed by the late Gounden in October 1938. Two years later the first Management Committee was elected. Through the efforts of this committee, the temple gained country-wide recognition for its conservation efforts. As a result, the temple was presented with a Conservation Award, in 1986. **Foto: Thambooran Gounden**

(Risingsunnewspapers.co.za/11842/temple-heritage-landmark/Thursday, October 12, 2023)

Despite the enforcement of the abhorrent Group Areas Act resulting in the mass removal of people from Cato Manor and the artery road project threatening to have the temple demolished, the original structure remained. Village tale has it that the spirit of the Goddess Ammen protected the holy site.





Thousands of devotees from all parts of KwaZulu Natal, swell the ranks of devotees at all major observations. A popular annual event is the **Garagam Festival**. The garagam symbolizes the crown of “Mother Mariamman”; it is carried on the head honouring the “Mother” as the queen of the universe. The traditional colour of garments worn by devotees is yellow. This annual event celebrated on Mother’s Day draws a crowd of more than 5000 people

References:

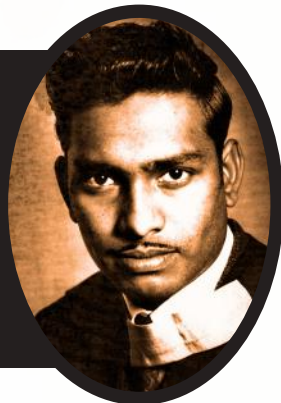
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Thursday (1923): October 12.



FAREWELL TO DR JAGADESAN PATHER (JUGGIE)



Farewell to the indefatigable co-founder of Vanakkam SA & the Centre for Creative Arts & Tamil Culture (Westcliffe, Chatsworth), author of several books, historian, educationist, journalist, photographer, and artist.



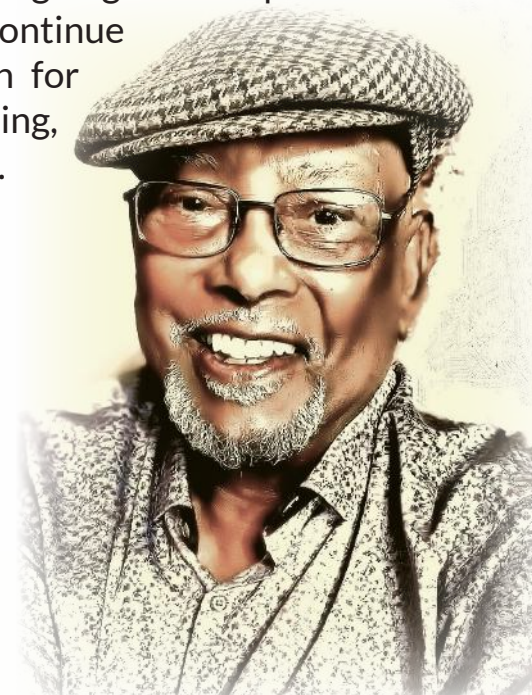
All who worked with Juggie, as he is well known, is a man for all seasons; he was dedicated, passionate, and committed to whatever task he undertook.

In his 88 years on our space ship earth, he has touched the lives of thousands and in turn, was touched by as many; as a teacher/lecturer, and role model, he set very high standards. In resigning from public life, he will continue with his passion for writing, painting, and researching.



He will also continue strengthening his quarterly eMagazine, **The Voice** which is dedicated to offering solutions to improve life in South Africa.

(Vanakkam SA Team).



NAVRATRI



Annaiyum Pithavum Munnari Deivam Matha, Pitha, Guru, Deivom

Mother and Father before God

Vanakkam, Namasthe, Namaskaram.

I greet you all in the revered name of Mother Shakthi in her various omnipotent forms. Allow me to humbly present some understanding of the significance of this period and my personal perspective on the importance of this Festival of Navratri. I humbly request this indulgence, even though you may not totally align yourself with all aspects of my perspective.

ONE MOTHER — DIFFERENT FORMS

You will all agree that if we reflect on the various things that our Mothers do or did for us, it would fill a library of literature. She was our personal Chef when we were hungry: She was our Doctor when we became ill: She was our Nurse when we needed some “high care”: She was our Benefactor when we needed that little extra money; She was our Chauffeur in some cases....and the list could go on. Yet, She was just one person...and She performed every role lovingly without favour, complaints, impatience or regret.



It was through the wisdom of our ancestral Sages and Scribes of the Upanishads and Vedas that different “Metaphysical” forms were given to the different aspects of the Mother relative to the roles that they performed. Thus, if we prayed for prosperity and good health, we prayed to Mother in the form of Lakshmi, and if we prayed for education, we prayed to Mother Sarasvathie, and so on.

NAVRATRI

The Scriptures inform us that this period of Navratri was characterised by the physical fight between Goddess Durga and the demon Mahishasura — which was a difficult and challenging one — as is our personal striving to rid ourselves of the ‘demons’ and undesirable tendencies within us. Navratri symbolically represents that struggle and eventual victory of good over evil — the struggle that is constantly taking place in human hearts and minds. The human mind, to varying extents and intensity, is plagued by the destructive forces of our ego, anger, aggression, competitiveness, avarice, greed. lust and envy — which all serve to frustrate the quest for happiness, harmony and contentment. The ten-day Navratri observance, penance, sacrifice and realisations will benefit every one of us as it slowly eradicates the negative tendencies within us.



Over the almost two years of the worst pandemic experienced by humankind, the world has had to endure the realization that the avaricious pursuit of wealth at all costs was an ephemeral preoccupation or a passing fantasy when faced with the threat of Covid and the loss of family and friends that many of us suffered. The futility of the destruction in the wake of family feuds and business relationships became starkly apparent as we became prisoners of our different worlds and existence.



WORSHIP OF MOTHERS DURGA, LAKSHMI AND SARASVATHIE

Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati are not different entities, but different facets of the singular Divine Mother.

Nava means “nine” and “ratri” means night. During the nine nights of the Festival of Navratri the supreme female cosmic power or Goddess Shakti is worshipped in her variously manifested forms as Durga, Lakshmi and Sarasvati. All three Goddess are the incarnations of Goddess Shakti (the Supreme Mother Goddess).

FIRST THREE NIGHTS

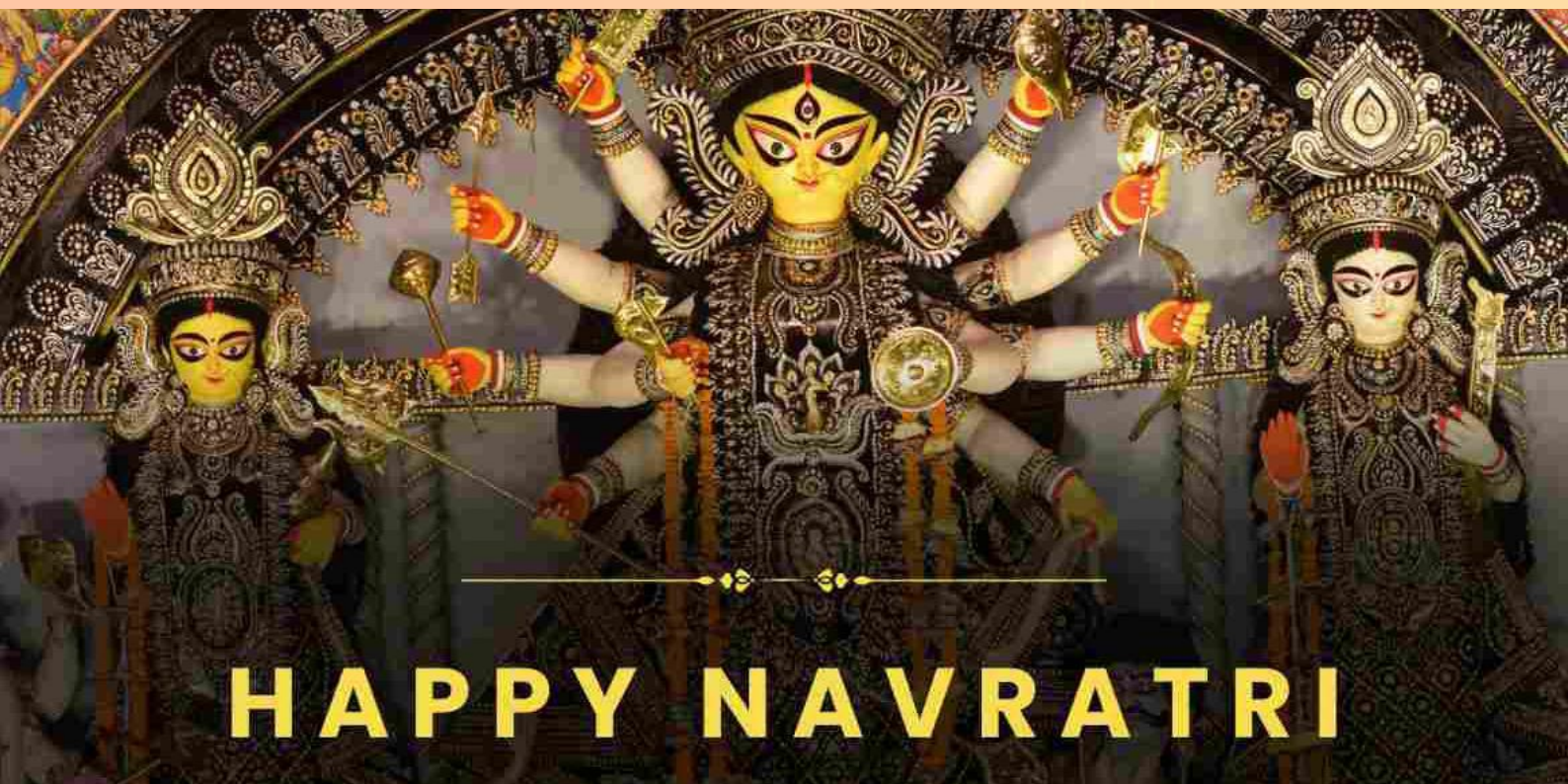
On the first three nights, Mother as Durga is worshipped for her strength and ferocity which are required to eradicate from the mind its strongly-rooted, deep-seated negative tendencies. Goddess Durga fought Mahishasura and his army for nine days and nine nights. This powerful and energising aspect of Mother Durga symbolically represents the fierce commitment to triumph over the debilitating negativisms — a principle that should be central to our existence. In the first three nights, Mother Durga is the form that provides us with the energy to face these challenges.

Noble virtues and spiritual living can only be enhanced when all vices and self-destructive tendencies in the mind are destroyed. It is often difficult to destroy our innate negativisms and sometimes destructive tendencies — largely because of a sense of denial that these undesirable qualities prevail within our psyche and our hearts. Despite being endowed with abundant energy and potential, our focus in many cases is on material gain and we often prefer to do very little for our spiritual well-being and enjoyment. Material wealth is extremely important. However, the obscene pursuit of this materialism devoid of morality and integrity is the demon that pervades the lives of many.

Our worship of Goddess Durga during the first three nights of Navarathri is actually our invocation to unleash the Divine Power within us to assist us in destroying our undesirable tendencies through this energy.

SECOND THREE NIGHTS

When a person gradually gains victory over the undesirable tendencies, there is a void or emptiness that permeates our lives. If left empty, the new-found victory over our negative tendencies will soon diminish. Therefore, this void should be filled with spiritual wealth in unison with our pursuit of necessary financial wealth. For this, a devotee approaches Goddess Lakshmi, who provides all kinds of wealth, prosperity, good health and contentment. Goddess Lakshmi represents wealth that we assume to be only material wealth.

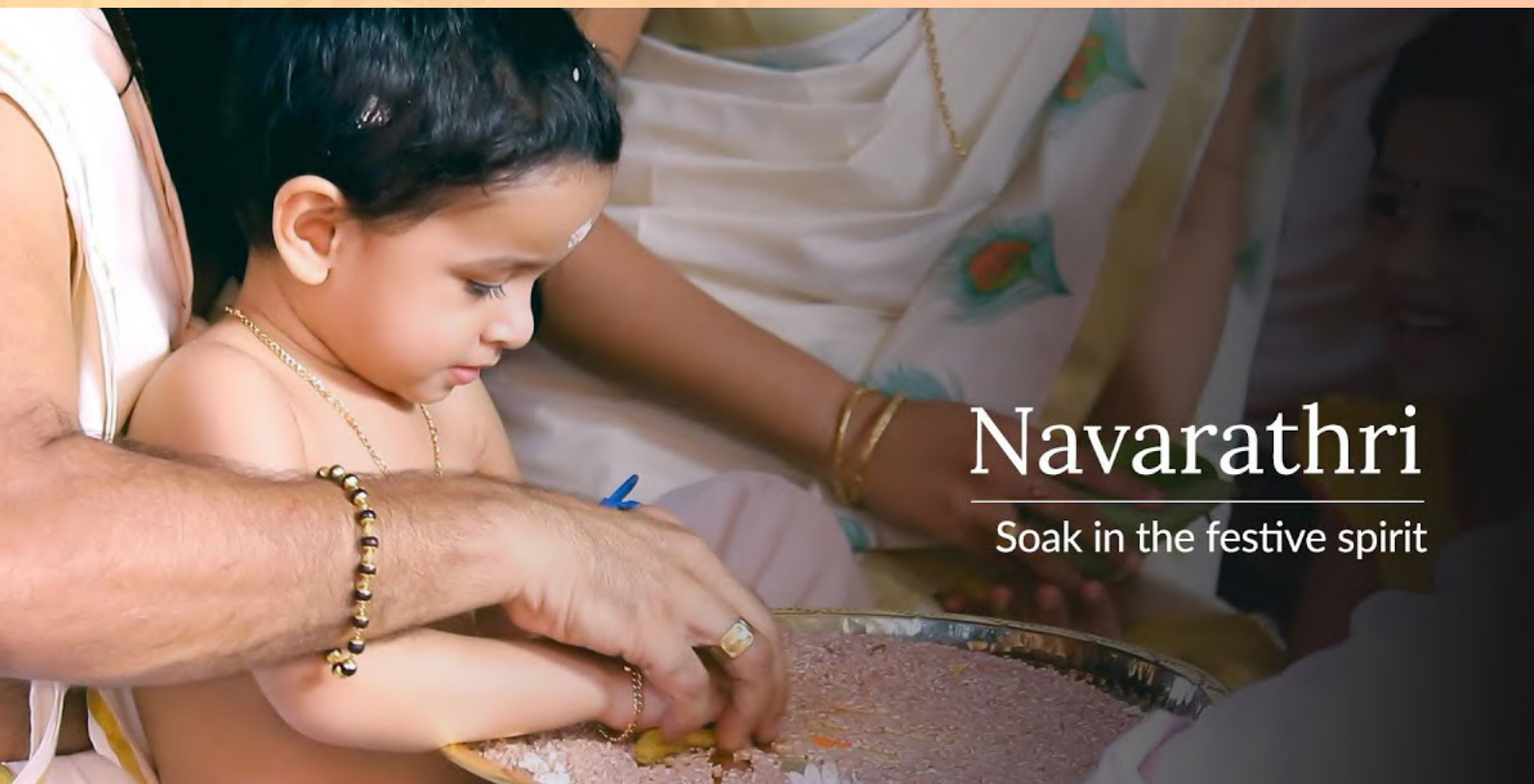




But material wealth is needed only in this physical world and without self-discipline, respect, sincerity, kindness and love collectively allowing us spiritual gratification. material wealth alone has the potential to make our lives problematic and sometimes miserable. The real wealth is the spiritual wealth alongside the material wealth that we can gain by the practice of the moral values in our lives, which purifies our minds and takes us closer towards real happiness and contentment.

For this self-realization to dawn upon us, we have to first prepare our minds. Our worship of Goddess Lakshmi is actually our attempt to seek the guidance and blessings of the Divine to help us in attaining this purification of mind before the pursuit of the abundances of life. Goddess Lakshmi is our source of this true wealth. By our worship, we invite her to bring into our homes Her blessings of noble values to nourish and purify our minds, in addition to material wealth, which, understandably, we cannot do without.

Thus, on the second three nights, Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped towards the objective of acquiring the material and spiritual trappings that collectively afford us the greatest joy and happiness. Critically, Mother Lakshmi is not just the enabler of gross wealth or prosperity, She is the Mother who provides according to the needs and just deserves of Her children, including good health and mental peace.



Navarathri

Soak in the festive spirit



HAPPY
Navratri

LAST THREE NIGHTS

The true knowledge to manage and diligently maintain this new wealth through the Grace of Mother Lakshmi is elusive. Many people squander and misuse their wealth and well-being because this true knowledge and ability to manage their wealth is disregarded – often through the arrogance of wealth and a perceived elevated status that flows from it. The final three nights are spent in the invocation of Goddess Sarasvati. The ability to be discerning, cautious, prudent and wise can only be gained only through proper knowledge and thorough understanding of success and happiness – a boon bestowed on us through the brain and the tongue graced and blessed by Mother Sarasvathie. Goddess Sarasvathie symbolizes this highest knowledge of the Self, and our ability to manage all things around us, especially our wealth.

VIJAYA DASHAMI - THE TENTH NIGHT – NIGHT OF VICTORY

The tenth day is Vijaya Dashami, when Mother finally conquers the evil Mahishasura. This Festival of Victory symbolises the moment when Truth dawns within us all and we are filled with a resolve and commitment to rid ourselves of negativisms and strive towards peace and harmony. True observance, penance, sacrifice and introspection during this period will afford us the gift of triumphantly declaring that we too have won the war – the triumph over our own indiscretions and personal demons that sometimes destroy our marriages, our family relationships and friendships.

Thus, the significance of each stage of worship has clear parallels in the different stages of our behavioural practices. First, we need to acquire the energy and resolve to control the negative tendencies; second, we seek the Grace of Mother to endow us with the necessary material and spiritual boons leading to prosperity and happiness; third, after gaining the necessary mental purity and material wealth, knowledge needs to be acquired to manage the acquisitions that court with it new challenges of life.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE MOTHER - BEAUTIFULLY INTERWOVEN

In effect, Mother Supreme in her various forms works in a continuum and in unison to ensure that we are all blessed with the qualities that are necessary for peaceful and harmonious existence. Mother Durga provides the energy to Mother Lakshmi to provide us with prosperity, good health and wealth, who then leaves it to Mother Sarasvathie to provide us with the education to manage whatever has been bestowed on us by Mother Lakshmi. How amazingly crafted is this tribute and obeisance to the Mother in her exquisite forms!

TRANSLATE MOTHER WORSHIP INTO BEHAVIOUR IN THE HOME AND FAMILY

While many of us go to Temples to invoke the Blessings of the Mother, one must always remember that the 'Cycle of Prayer' is never complete until we turn "one-dimensional worship" into "three-dimensional behaviour". In other words, Prayer to the Mother form in the Temples is never complete until we come home and offer the same love, respect and devotion to our own Mothers, our Mothers-in-Law and our Wives — they are the true and real embodiment of Mother Shakthi.



OUR PERSONAL PURSUIT OF VICTORY OF GOOD OVER EVIL

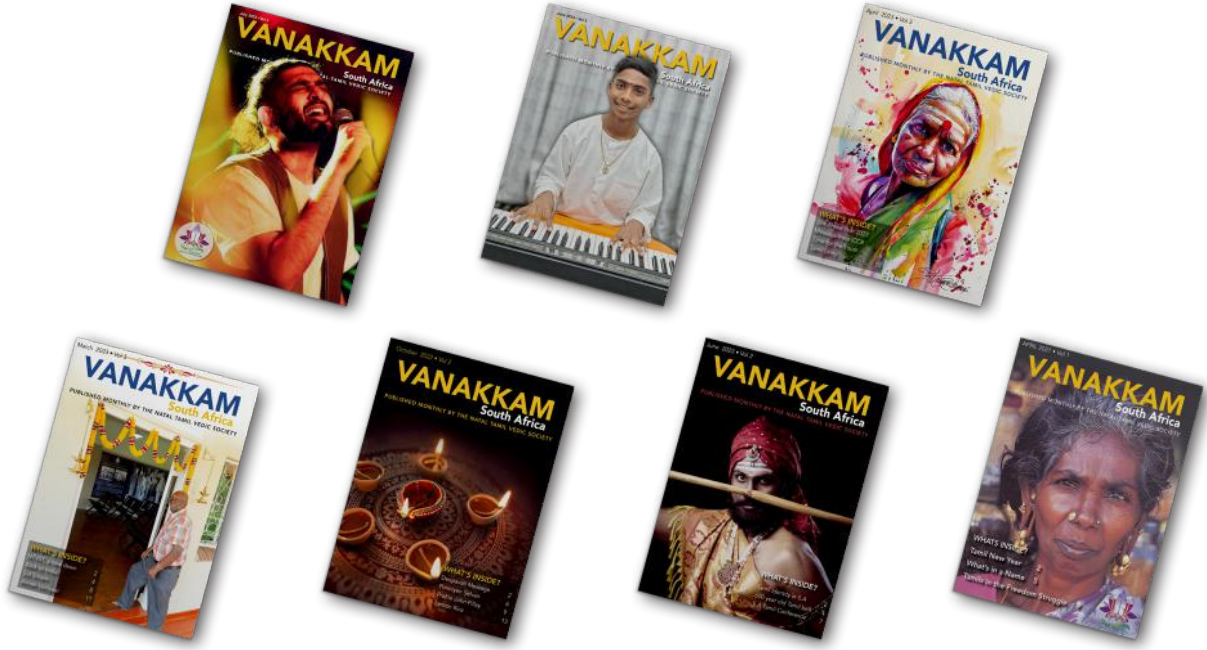
As humans, we often err in the way we manage our relationships with the “Lakshmi’s” in our lives and almost every one of us is at fault to varying extents. We need to understand that this period of Navratri is the “pit-stop”, a time for reflection, re-alignment and redress. While it may not be humanly possible to over-turn all the undesirable tendencies at once, at least commit yourselves to strive towards the systematic eradication of negativism, chauvinism, discrimination, arrogance and aggression in our personal lives, especially towards all Mothers, who are indisputably the first and foremost living Gods in our lives.

It sometimes defies explanation that we can forgive our friends, our spouses and our colleagues —but we sometimes find it difficult to understand and tolerate the shortcomings or inadequacies of our Mothers, if any. If you have erred or transgressed in your relationships with your Mothers, Mothers-in Law or your wives, have the courage to ask their forgiveness, lest it be too late and un-retrievable.

When we reach the tenth day, let us all, like Mother Durga who triumphantly overcame Mahishasura, also shout from the rooftops and claim that we too stride in triumph by having moved that one small aorta, if not the entire heart. Amma Yenrazhaikaathe, Wuyir illaiye — there is no life without Mother.

*May you off be Blessed with the Divine Grace, Energy, Prosperity and
Wisdom of our afather Supreme on this Navratri.
With love, devotion and humility
Solomon Parthasarthy (SoCCy) Piday*

Previous Issues



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