

Om Sarawanabawa

History of Montreal Thirumurugan Temple

- Saiva Mission of Quebec –
- Canada -

History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it.
- Winston Churchill -

Opinions differ but our Goals & Objectives remained the same.
This was our strength in achieving to this stage
by the Grace of Almighty Lord Murugan.
Weaknesses we never worried. Strengths we always honoured.
- Saiva Mission of Quebec -



Then in 1985



1991



1995



Now in 2006

- Hindu Mission of Canada - In the streets of Montreal - Our Phase I –“Balaalayam” - Our New ornate Temple -

Volunteers became Members & Presidents.
Members & Presidents became volunteers.

1983 - Ever since the Hindu immigrants began to swell in numbers there has been a change in the ethnic character of Montreal's population as in other North American cities. The growth of Tamil and Saivism were integral part of the lives of immigrants especially from South India and Sri Lanka. Religion and language have been the main components of heritage preserved and propagated by the Tamil community. In the early eighties the need for community worship was strongly felt by the Sri Lankan Tamil community settled in the province of Quebec.

1984 - The Tamil Saivites of Montreal joined other devotees and congregated on Fridays the weekly auspicious day for the Saivaites at Hare Rama Hare Krishna Temple located at 1626 Pie IX Blvd, Montreal - Quebec in performing their religious rituals.

Organized some of our religious observances in the premises. Sponsors of the Friday poojas and special days increased many folds. Consequent to the influx of Tamils into Montreal in the following year it became necessary to make other arrangements due to increases in attendance for prayers and the growing demand for exclusive religious services for the community.

1985 - Thanks to the three well-wishers namely Mr. Sri Ranganatha Iyer, Mr. Chelliah Rajaratnam and Mr. Apputhurai Kanagalingam (the founder members) arrangements were established with the management of Hindu Mission of Canada Temple at 955 Bellechasse Ave, Montreal – Quebec for using their facilities on a limited basis. The weekly activities started with few members eventually evolved into hundreds of people coming and forming the Saiva Mission of Quebec in 1985 with the main objective of building an authentic temple dedicated to Lord Murugan and centre to serve cultural and social needs of the community.

The founder members sought help from the Attorney Mr. Melvin Weigel and initiated the official registration of the newly formed Saiva Mission of Quebec. The mission was formerly approved by the Provincial Government of Quebec thereafter. The first executive committee of the Saiva Mission of Quebec comprising of eleven members were elected on August 1985. Office bearers are listed in “Office bearers since 1985 – 2006” in this book.

1986 - On 11th March 1986 the Saiva Mission of Quebec was officially registered by the provincial government of Quebec as a Religious and Cultural Organization.

The granite statue of Ganapathi was temporarily installed at the Hindu Mission of Canada Temple on 'Vinayagar Chaturthi' day in 1986. Mr. Ananda Krishnan donated the statue, which was brought from South India to facilitate Vinayagar worshipping believed to remove all obstacles and endow devotees with success. As Ranganatha Iyer (a founder member priest) moved to Toronto the community didn't have a proper priest, Mr. Soundararjan volunteered and did the poojas for a short period.

Sri Aappathorana Govindarajah Kurukkal (popularly known as Venu Iyah) joined in Oct 1986 and performed all religious activities since then.

1987 - The Saiva Mission of Quebec was recognized by the Federal Government of Canada as a registered religious and charitable organization on 1st of April 1987. All contributions and donations were made tax deductible since 1987.

First ever benefit performance was organized by Mrs. Vasantha Krishnan of Nirthalaya Dance academy in aid of the Temple Project.

Having realized the need for a socio-cultural centre intensified by the arrival of more immigrant Hindus, the Saiva Mission decided to build a community centre and 'Balalayam'. The Saiva Mission preferred a location in the suburbs of Montreal with larger space rather than choosing a site in the middle of urban setting for purposes of meeting its objectives.

1990 - Sri Venkadeswara Sarma (popularly known as Sri Iyah) started performing jointly with Venu Iyah in the religious activities from 1990.

1991 - In April 1991 the constitution of the Saiva Mission of Quebec was amended accommodating the Board of Trustees with more responsibilities and executive powers to oversee the activities of the Temple's administration and for crucial decision making jointly with the Executive Committee involving large sums of monies on behalf of the Mission.

In July, 1991 Deity of Lord Murugan was taken procession on a decorated chariot along the streets of down town Montreal on day of the Ratha Yathra festival organized by Hare Krishna Hare Rama organization. Kavadi dancers and devotees followed the procession chanting hymns on Lord Murugan. This event was mainly initiated by Mr. Thirunadarajah and ardent volunteers who made necessary arrangements with Swami Narasimhadass of Hare Krishna temple.

Later in August 1991 a procession for our Thamil Kadavul Lord Murugan from Montreal to a wooded suburb known as Val-Morin which is about an hour drive was very religiously done by our very enthusiastic volunteers of our Temple. Thanks to the initiatives of Mr. Thirunadarajah, arrangements were established with Late Swami Vishnudevananda of Sivanandha Yoga Ashram organization at Val-Morin. They were to host an annual event wherein every summer the devotees gathered in large numbers for the annual festivities of 'Ratha Yathra'. Significant devotees arrived as far as Toronto, New York, New Jersey and other far away places in Canada. Saiva Mission volunteers and devotees organized many small huts to supply a free flow of cold drinks, food etc. The Lord Murugan was taken in a procession fitted on to a Pick-Up Truck and covered with ornamental artistic decorations created by enthusiastic volunteers

Mr. Gerry Weiner, then Hon. MP and Minister of Immigration & Multiculturalism hosted a breakfast meeting at Holiday Inn - Dollard des Ormeaux. Members of the Executive Committee, Board of Trustees and well-wishers attended on behalf of the Saiva Mission of Quebec to introduce our noble project of building the authentic Saiva Temple in Dollard des Ormeaux. A similar meeting was held with the then Hon. Provincial Minister Mr. Sam Elkas. Construction related meetings were held at OPRON Construction Company to build the Phase 1 of the Temple Project where Mr. Ananda Krishnan was affiliated.

Very eminent religious leaders and scholars - Thirumuruga Kirupanatha Variar, Swami Satchidnanda of Virginia, Pithukulli Murugathas, Athmajothi Muthiah, Pulavar Keeran, Ramiah Yogi, have visited and blessed the temple project. Very eminent Priests Sivasri Naguleswara Kurukkal, Sivasri Sami Viswanatha Kurukkal, Prof. Kailasanatha Kurukkal, Sivasri Somaskantha Kurukkal and Sivasri Rathina Kailasanatha Kurukkal have visited and performed special poojas and blessed. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami the president of the Saiva Sidhantha Monastery and Publisher of Hinduism

Today – Hawaii – USA visited Montreal in 1991 blessed the temple project and offered to sponsor the main deity of the temple in granite.

1992 - On 12th February 1992 the Saiva Mission purchased the bare land of 72,000 sq.ft at St-Regis Blvd in the City of Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec for \$450,000.

Sivasri Poorna Thiagarajah Kurukkal joined our Temple and addressed the devotees on 28 February 1992. Poomi Pooja (blessing of the land) was performed by Sivasri Poorna Thiyagarajah Kurukkal and Venu Iyah in April 1992.

First meeting by the newly elected Board of Trustees was held in April 1992.

Tree planting ceremony was held on 12th September 1992. This was the first grand function organized at the building site, which was well attended by devotees and distinguished guests. The Mayor of Dollard des Ormeaux, his councillors and The Regional Police Commandant attended this ceremony. Mayor donated couple of Red Maple and Blue Spruce Trees to mark this ceremony. Hundreds of devotees donated and planted trees to mark as the First event towards our Dream Project of Building the authentic Montreal ThiruMurugan Temple on this dedicated soil declared as “Holy Land”. Significant number of devotees, volunteers and members of Saiva Mission of Quebec donated money towards this land on a square footage basis as the memorable souvenir of their families.

Family members of Mr. Kandiah Satkunanathan donated a panchaloka (combination of five metals) statue of Lord Murugan with Valli and Theivayanai and it was installed at the Hindu Mission on the 16th Oct 1992.

Mrs. Sarasi Raj and her daughter Mrs. Kalpalatha Filto of Peali Arpana Dance Academy organized a Bharatha Natya benefit performance in aid of the Temple's Building Project. “VALLI THIRUMANAM” a benefit Bharatha Natya dance performance by Mrs. Vasantha Krishnan of Nirthalaya Dance academy in aid of the Temple Building Project was held in Montreal on 22 Nov 92 and in Toronto on 28 Nov 1992.

1993 - Phase – I (Preliminary developments)

Mr. Thirunadarajah blessed by His Holiness Subramuniya Swami of Hawaii Saiva Sidhthantha Monastery who made arrangements with Edmonton Ganapathy Temple for the services of Dr. V. Ganapathi Sthapathy when he visited Ganapathy Temple in Edmonton. Dr. V. Ganapathi Sthapathy resided at Mr. Thirunadarajah's residence and drew the first drawing of the temple.

Dr. V Ganapathi, a competent Dravidian architectural expert “Vaasthu Vignani” from Tamil Nadu (India), visited the building site on June 2, 1993, on a Visakam Day, for formal commencement and planning of the temple structure.

1994 - Saiva Mission of Quebec awarded the plaque “KALI NARTHAGAI” to Mrs. Vasantha Krishnan on 15th January 1994, the annual Thai Pongal festival held at St. Henri Auditorium in Montreal for her unsurpassed contribution towards our Temple Project. She a well acclaimed Bharatha Natyam dancer and the President of Nirthalaya Dance academy of Montreal who had arranged few fund raising performances.

First “Pannisai Porty” (Competition of Devotional songs) was first organized by initiatives of the then Secretary Mr. Arul Supramaniam in 4 divisions with respect to the age groups of the participating children. Certificates and gifts were given to the children on the day of the annual “Thai Pongal” (Farmer's festival) celebrations held on 15 January 1994. Mr. Arul Supramaniam was also very instrumental in organizing the religious classes for the children during the Friday Pooja services.

The International Conference of Saivaithe Philosophy and Forth International seminar on Saiva Siddhantham (Canada) was held on 9th and 10th of July 1994. Saiva Mission of Quebec sponsored this event at the request of International Institute for Saiva Siddhantha research, Dharmapuram, Tamil Nadu, India. Delegates and prominent scholars from religious orders and Universities from many countries including Sri Lanka, India, U.K and Australia covered the whole spectrum of Siva worship and Saivism with special emphasis on Saiva Siddhantham. Late “Aathma Jothi” Muthiah presided this convention.

Mr. Uthayakumar a long time volunteer initiated a Tamil monthly news letter in this year.

1995 - Phase – I (Traditional/Religious developments – Main Temple)

The “Sod Turning” (Ground Breaking) ceremony was held at an auspicious time on May 29, 1995 by the divine grace of Almighty Lord Murugan at 1611 St-Regis Blvd, DDO (the location of the new temple).

Pre-authorized monthly payment plan was launched in April 1995 in order to solicit donations in a regular and organized manner through the bank. Finance facility obtained from CIBC to support the project secured by guarantees from Mr. T. Balenthiran, Mr. M. Umapathy, Mr. S.Saravanabawan and Mr. Ananda Krishnan against investments.

In keeping with Hindu tradition, the conch laying ceremony for the most bestowed ThiruMurugan Temple took place on June 18, 1995 immediately followed by laying of foundation. Devotees, well-wishers and guests participated in large numbers.

Phase – I Building committee was elected to supervise and execute matters as and when necessary regarding the Phase I project. It was also decided that the newly formed Building committee headed by the President of the Board of Trustees Mr. Ananda Krishnan would update all matters related to the Phase I project to the Executive committee members and trustees periodically. The Phase I Building committee members were Messrs Ananda Krishnan (Chief administrator & Project Manager), T. Balenthiran S. Raveenthiramoorthy V. Vijayakanthan and M. Umapathy

Phase – I, consists of 7000 Square foot building with a basement. This building served as the Balalayam (temporary temple). Major construction was handled by OPRON Construction Company supervised by Mr. Ananda Krishnan. Participation by volunteers played a key role in reducing the overall cost of Phase I construction. Shrines were built by Sarawanas Jeyarajah aachaari for deities Ganesha, Murugan, Vengateswara, Natarajar, Bairavar and Vasantha Mandapam.

The Consecration ceremony of Phase – I, was religiously performed during the auspicious hours of 8.15 – 9.15 AM on 12 November 1995 by Sivasri Poorana Thiyagarajah Kurukkal assisted by other priests from Montreal and Toronto.

1996 - Phase – I (Traditional/Religious Further developments – Durkai Amman Temple)

Shrines for Navagrahas (nine planets) and Goddess Durka were added in 1996. Sri Venkadeswara Sarma (Sri Iyah) resided in the temple and was appointed as the permanent priest of the temple. The formal works on the Durkai Amman shrine started in July by the Artisan Mr. Selvarajah and assisted by artisan Mr. S. Arumugam of Tamil Nadu, India.

The Consecration ceremony was held on 25 August 1996 for Durkai Amman Shrine. Mr. & Mrs Uthayakumaran & Family of Dollard des Ormeaux donated all costs for this shrine and the subsequent consecration ceremony. Traditional young shoots of Coconut palm, Fresh Lotus flowers & Roses and Mango leaves were specially flown in refrigerated boxes from Thailand by the generous donations from a pioneer member for the consecration ceremony.

The First Annual Festival started on 6th September 1996. “Ther” (Chariot) Festival was on 14th September and “Theertham” (Holy Dip) festival was on 15th September 1996.

Weekly classes in Tamil language and Saiva religion was held for children by well trained teachers of the community. The classes were formally commenced on 27th October 1996 first consisting of 40 students

All the volunteers of the Temple organized a benefit performance “KOPURAM” in aid of the Temple Building Project in June 1996. The important member of these volunteers was Mr. Uthayakumar who initiated this annual fund raising program and continued in later years.

Messrs. Raveenthiran and Pushpan members of Montreal Youth Circle sports club organized an open Volley Ball tournament in aid of the Temple Building Project.

One of our past Presidents Mr. B. Paramsothy affectionately called as “PETHA” beautified the Temple’s front lawn with very attractive flowering plants at his own expenses and he continues until now in 2006.

1997 – On “Saraswathi Pooja” day, arrangements were made with Mrs. Sarasi Raj and her daughter Mrs. Kalpalatha Filto of Peali Arpana Dance academy to commence teaching of “Bharatha Natyam” in our basement hall. Also classical music classes commenced on this day by Mrs. Selvamalar Mathuranayagam of “Mathura Kana Manram”

In accordance with the objectives it was decided by the executive committee to operate and maintain a library at the Temple with a view to promote social and cultural activities. Inauguration of the library took place on 14th January 1997.

1998 - One of our dedicated volunteers Mr. K. Selvakumar solely worked and released the First ever CD "PUGALAARAM" a collection of devotional songs performed by local artists and vocalists. Mr. Selvakumar donated the total proceeds to the Temple building funds. He was very instrumental in introducing many devotional audio cassettes while the Temple was functioning at the Hindu Mission of Canada, 955 Bellechasse St before we moved to our building in Dollard des Ormeaux.

Mirudangam classes were conducted by prominent Teacher Mr. K. Uthayakumar.

Snowstorm hit the province of Quebec and Ontario during the winter of 1998. Thousands of people were stranded in their own homes without power and heating for weeks. Montreal Murugan Temple volunteers helped to accommodate those people at the basement of the Temple with shelters and food day and night. Thanks to the Grace of Lord Murugan, Temple's gas powered cooking appliances and heating helped to serve the community. The services rendered to the community were praised by the City of Dollard des Ormeaux.

1999 – Quality of Education and improvements became eminent at the Temple's Sunday school. Realising the quality of educational services rendered by our dedicated volunteer teachers, many parents sent their children to our Temple's Sunday classes and the progress of Sunday school was very evident in these years from 1999. The trend is still continuing with pride and excellences by the children until now. Our appreciations go to the entire volunteer Teachers and Mr. K. Theivendram whose initiatives transformed the existing Sunday school as the "School of Heritage Studies" known in Tamil as "Kalai Neri Kalvi Kalagam".

2000 - First official website for Montreal Murugan Temple www.montrealmurugan.org was launched. The annual costs was donated and administered until now by a pioneer member and an ardent supporter of this Temple Project for many years.

2001 - Phase – II (Preliminary developments – Dr. V. Ganapathy Sthapthy - Chennai)

Auspicious "Sod Turning" ceremony at 9.30 AM on 10th June 2001 was religiously performed by Vaasthuvignani Dr. V. Ganapathy Sthapathy of India when he visited the Holy Land of Montreal ThiruMurugan Temple. He and his disciple along with Executive Committee members, Trustees and many well-wishers participated in the "Sod Turning Ceremony" precisely at 9.30AM on this day. The preliminary conceptual form of Temple building according to agama shastras was initially designed by the eminent temple builder of Tamil Nadu Dr. V. Ganapathi Sthapathi.

March 10, 2001 a delegation of members, volunteers and devotees organized a fund raising campaign in Toronto. This event also served the purpose to create an awareness of our noble project of building an Authentic Temple in Canada.

2002 - Phase – II (Preliminary developments – Dakshinamoorthy Sthapathy - Karaikudi)

Mandate was granted to the members of the Board of Trustees at the Joint Executive committee meeting held in March 2002 to find a second source for the Temple's Hindu Architectural works.

Trustees found two sources and selected Dakshinamoorthy Sthapathy of Vivek Vedic Architects of Karaikudi – Tamil Nadu, India. The Board members jointly and unanimously decided in April 2002 to sign the contract with Dakshinamoorthy Sthapathy of Vivek Vedic Architects of Karaikudi – Tamil Nadu, India for the entire Phase II project with respect to all Saivaite Architectural designs and workmanships as per "Vaasthu Shasthiram".

Phase - II Building committee was elected to supervise and execute matters as and when necessary regarding the Phase II project. It was also decided that the Building committee headed by the then President Mr. M. Umopathy would update all matters related to the Phase II project to the Executive committee members and trustees periodically. The Phase II Building committee members were Messrs M. Umopathy (Chief Project Coordinator), T. Balenthiran, S. Raveenthiramoorthy, V. Vijayakanthan, S. Sarawanabawan and K. Yoganathan.

Mr. S. Sarawanabawan and Mr. K. Yoganathan the Structural Engineering experts of our Building committee studied very intensively from their own experiences and sought some advises from their fellow Engineers in Canada and USA about the building aspects of this Temple to withstand in adverse weather conditions as encountered in Quebec. More information of this construction related engineering details as studied by them is given in "Report from the Building committee" in another section of this Book.

Auspicious Religious Ceremony was held on 6th June 2002 by Sivasri Poorna Thiyagarajah Kurukkal on the Temple soil along with other Temple priests prior to the commencement of the works for Phase II. Members of the Executive committee and Board of Trustees attended the ceremony. Conch-Setting ("Sangu Sthapana") ceremony was held during the auspicious hours of 5 AM on Thursday, 13th June 2002 and thereafter for the convenience of the Devotees and well wishers it was continued from 15 - 16th June 2002. Dakshinamoorthy Sthapathy performed the religious ceremonial rituals. Sivasri Poorna Thiyagarajah Kurukkal and other Temple priests chanted Mantras during the ceremony.

Latter part of 2002 in a joint discussion meeting with Executive committee members and the First Board of Trustees it was decided to increase the number of the Board of Trustees. All these names were announced at the official discussion meeting presided by the President Mr. Krishnamoorthy.

Second CD "ARULAARAM" a collection of devotional songs performed by artists and vocalists in Canada & Sri Lanka was released by the same dedicated volunteer Mr. K. Selvakumar who released the CD in 1998. He donated the total proceeds to the Temple building funds.

2003 - Finance facility obtained from CIBC to support the project secured by guarantees from Mr & Mrs. M. Umopathy, Mr. & Mrs. V. Vijayakanthan and Mr. & Mrs. S. Vasanthan against mortgage of residential houses and Mr & Mrs. J. Jeyavel, Mr. K. Sivapalan, Mr. N. Sriragavan and Mrs. S. Anushuyadevi against investments.

Third CD "KAATHAL VALAI" a collection of songs performed by artists and vocalists in India was released by the same volunteer who released the First devotional CD for the Temple in 1998. He donated the total proceeds to the Temple building funds. Popular singer Mr. S.P Balasubramaniam's song also was recorded in this CD.

2004 - A member from the executive committee Mr. C. Sivaraman was requested to be included to the Phase - II building committee to supervise, oversee the constructions works and to execute urgent works as and when required.

Mrs. Tharaga Satgunabala a popular Dance Teacher organized a Bharatha Natya benefit performance in aid of the Temple's Building Project.

2005 - A parcel of land nearly 52,000 sq ft in area was bought for \$ 368,000 in January 2005 to extend the social and cultural services.

Temple's structural aspects were completed in summer 2005 and major portions of the Temple's religious architectural aspects were also completed by end of 2005.

2006 - Maha Khumbhabhishekam (Consecration ceremony) was held on Sunday, 28 May 2006 during the auspicious hours between 7.47 - 8.47 AM. The Consecration ceremony was led by Sivasri Poorna Thiagarajah Kurukkal a well known scholar of Annamalai University - Chennai, India and our long time guiding priest of Montreal Murugan Temple. He was assisted by many leading priests from Montreal and Toronto in Canada along with visiting leading priests from Sri Lanka, India, Australia, Denmark, and United Kingdom. The aura of auspices was witnessed by thousands of devotees from different cultures including religious and political dignitaries and scholars.

His holiness Bodthinatha Veylan Swami - The President of Saiva Sidhantha Monastery of Hawaii and Publisher of Hinduism Today - USA attended this ceremony and blessed many devotees. His holiness delivered a very important lecture on "Hindu way of Life for Today's Young generation".

First time ever in the history of Hindu Temples in Canada perhaps in North America, an official Canada Post stamp depicting the Temple with Temple's official First Day cover was released on this special day of the consecration ceremony. The cost was donated by a pioneer member and an ardent supporter of this Temple Project for many years.

The President & Trustee Mr. K. Yoganathan honoured Dakshinamoorthy Sthapathy with "PONNAADAI" (symbolic silk shawl of golden threads) The award plaque of Excellence "Sitpakalai Choodamani" (meaning Diadem of Architecture) was presented by the past President & Trustee Mr. M. Umopathy. The plaque of appreciation was presented by the past President & Trustee Mr. S. Raveenthiramoorthy. Honouring ceremony on behalf of the Saiva Mission of Quebec to the Temple Architect - Sthapathy Dakshinamoorthy Karuppiyah Aachari was held soon after the Maha Khumbhabhishekam.

Dr. Radhakrishnan prepared a DVD from many sources of history from our Temple. He was very helpful in releasing this special DVD on the day of the Khumbhabhishekam. His efforts and participation goes as far as the early days of history of our Temple.

Temple's Youth Group printed colourful T-Shirts depicting Lord Murugan and also the traditional "Vertu" was printed and donated by dedicated members of the Temple and sold to the devotees in raising funds for this immense project.

The President and Staff honoured the visiting eminent priest Pichai Kurukkal of Pillayarpatti, Tamilnadu - India and "Sitpakalaiyaran" Sarawanas Jeyarajah and the Temple Traditional classical bands on the final 48th day of the Mandala Abhishekam on 15th July 2006.

Sarawanas Jeyarajah donated an attractive small Golden Chariot to be used for the procession inside the New Temple on this day.

The foregoing is an attempt to recollect the events during the last twenty years or so during the existence of Saiva Mission of Quebec. We realize that we could not record all the events, achievements and contributions in detail. However, we trust these highlights will inspire our future generation to carry the 'torch' of the temple as a center to propagate the finer values of our religion, heritage, culture and language.

*Compiled and prepared by S. Raveenthiramorthy
Trustee, Past President & V.P
Montreal Thirumurugan Temple administered by
Saiva Mission of Quebec – Canada*

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President Mr. K. Yoganathan
Past Presidents & Trustees Mr. S. Thirunadarajah and Mr. M. Umapathy.
Trustees Mr. V. Vijayakanthan and Mr. S. Sarawanabawan*

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