

Saivite Tamil Foundation

Saivite Summer Camp



**Tenth Anniversary Souvenir
2015**

Saivite Tamil Foundation

2292 Regency Woods Drive
Lisle, IL 60532

Co editors:

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A 501 (c) (3) not for profit tax-exempt religious organization

Vanakkam!

We are pleased to announce our 10th anniversary celebration of our summer camp, created to serve the spiritual, religious and cultural needs of Sri Lankan Hindu children.

After 1983, many Sri Lankan Tamils migrated to Canada, and some to USA and these dislocated families, especially their young children and elderly, needed help because they no longer live in communities that support their religious traditions. The Foundation was formed to maintain our unique culture, simplistic religion and educate our children in its ways and traditions.

As you leaf through these pages, you will experience the contribution our foundation has provided to our children. Under the guidance of our spiritual advisor Rishi Thondunathan, our children have realized the value of our unique culture and our simplistic approach to our religious practices. Our elders find spiritual fulfillment at our religious discourse.

Join us! Together, we can grow and continue to provide these services to our children.

Thank you and hope to be of service to you always.

Nandri,
Sivagandhi Jeyendran
Executive Director

Please visit our web: saivite.org and please feel free to contact us with any questions, comments or suggestions.

Vanakkam!

“Menmai Kol Saiva Neethey, Vilankuha Ulagam Ellam”. Saivite Tamil Foundation has been organizing the summer camp for kids under the guidance of our Guru Rishi Thondunathan for the last nine years. This event has been very popular among kids, and they look forward to it every year. It started with just six kids in 2006, and now more than fifty kids participate every year.

Saivite Tamil Foundation was formed by Mrs. Gandhi Jeyendran and Dr. Jeyendran to serve the spiritual and cultural needs of the Sri Lankan Hindus in the United States. They have made this foundation a place where our kids learn their values, customs and festivals in many different ways. One of the main events conducted by the foundation is the summer camp. It begins on a Friday with the Vinayaga Pooja and ends on the following Sunday night with the open house where parents also assemble to listen to lectures. The camp usually includes Yoga practice, lectures on Hindu values, volunteering at charitable organizations, visit to a Hindu temple in the area and some outdoor fun activities. Kids learn to recite Thevaram and Thiruvagasam at the camp. Many of the kids who come to the camps every year have started singing very well.

Kids collect fund to donate to the needy children in Sri Lanka. Cancer patients in Jaffna hospital, needy elderly patients, and Tamil students in Sri Lanka are some of the beneficiaries of the foundation in the past. Kids learn the importance of charity at a very early age at this foundation. Guru Rishi Thondunathan

shares the stories of the people from Sri Lanka with the kids and parents towards the end of the camp. So the kids learn how the money they collected helps the people in less fortunate situation overcome obstacle in their lives. Kids and parents get excited when they learned how well some of the beneficiaries are doing from the funds donated.

My daughters, Diviya and Sumita, have been attending the summer camps for many years now, and they look forward to it every year. We always plan our family summer schedule to include the Saivite summer camp. I have been working closely with Mrs. Gandhi Jeyendran for the two years, and I can personally attest to her hard work during the camp to make the summer camp a success every year. I also would like take this opportunity to thank some of the many volunteers, Ms. Krithika Jeyendran, Mr. Murugesu Sivaparan, Mrs. Logini Ananthan and Mrs. Kala Raveendran for their hard work every year during the camp. Special thanks to our Guru Rishi Thondunathan for making every summer camp a great one.

Vanakkam!

Kumu Sivakadachan
Chairperson
Board of Directors

Greetings:

With the grace of God, this year we are celebrating the 10 year anniversary of our Saivaita Summer Camp in Chicago. It has been a pure joy and a blessing teaching the children and spending time with all of you over the years.

One of my personal beliefs is that it is vitally important to teach our children, especially those growing up in the western world, to have a clear understanding of our religion and culture. In our camps, we didn't spend time memorizing any scriptural verses or higher tatvas. But we learned about the basic beliefs and practices of the Hinduism, and the value of trying to "See God in everyone and everywhere." Understanding this core belief cultivates respect and compassion for each other; it leads to a desire to serve. Service to mankind is service to God for He is the very essence of each soul on this planet. I am so proud of our Summer Camp participants' involvement in various service projects in the US as well as in Sri Lanka.

My sincere thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Jeyendran for founding the Saivite Tamil Foundation and for sharing their beautiful home with us for the camp for the past 10 years. There are no words to express my gratitude to the Jeyendran family. Also, my thanks to all the Chicago Saivite Tamil families for opening your hearts and welcoming me as one of your family. I am humbled by your graciousness.

May God continue to bless you all! Let's continue our camps and make a difference in the planet.

With Love,

Rishi Thondunathan

MISSION STATEMENT

Saivite Tamil Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing guidance and knowledge on the basic concepts of Saivism, as well as spiritual counseling to the Sri Lankan Tamils of North America

SPECIFIC GOALS

- To educate children, young adults and elderly about Saivism and its beliefs by conducting religious discourse
- To reach out to the elderly by providing spiritual and moral support
- To reach out to those in need, by providing comfort, guidance and spiritual healing.

A tribute to Lord Ganesha

By Praveen Sahadewan
Meadow Glens Elementary, Naperville

O Lord Ganesha!

O Lord Ganesha, with your elephant face
And your four arms that move with grace.

O one with the tusk, O bringer of power
Please help us in life, at this fine hour.

You are a great Lord, amazing and true
As I move on, I learn the great deeds you do.

May you please remove the obstacles in our way
May you please help us each and every day.

O Lord Ganesha, the world you are saving
O Lord Ganesha, you are amazing.

A tribute to Saivite Tamil Foundation

By Vaelone Elankumaran
Brewster Elementary, Rochester Hills, MI

S is for summer camp
A is for always learning new things
I is for inspiring stories
V is for very remember able moments
I is for interesting tales
T is for trips on many trails
E is for educating Hinduism

T is for Tamil bhajans
A is for afternoon hikes
M is for morning yoga
I is for inside of all life is god
L is for learning about our religion

F is for fun with friends
O is for once a year
U is for unforgettable nights next to the campfire
N is for nighttime movies
D is for dharma, or duty
A is for an amazing experience
T is for tons of activities to do
I is for indoor and outdoor lessons
O is for Om, the beginning of all praying sessions
N is for new prayers every year.



Aum Namasivaya

Saivite Summer Camp



Aum Sri Ganeshaaya Namaha

Rishi Thondunathan, our spiritual advisor and teacher has taught the basic concepts and virtues of our Hindu faith since the introduction of summer camp by the Saivite Tamil Foundation. The success of any venture is realized when it grows. Our first religious summer camp initiated with a handful of children, mushrooming to more than 50 last year.

A Typical Summer Camp Itinerary

The camp is divided into two groups: Children 9 years and under will attend the day camp and older children will attend the weekend camp. The day camp is held separately from the weekend camp. Older children who attend the weekend camp spend Friday night through Sunday evening at the camp site.

Day Camp Itinerary:

Day camp is held either before or after the weekend summer camp. It starts with Puja for Ganesha followed with yoga lessons for few minutes either in the morning at 9 AM or in the afternoon at 2 PM. They are taught to sing Bajans and learn about Lord Ganesha, Murugan, and Lord Siva. They are given handouts to take home.

Weekend Camp Itinerary:

Friday evening, children are welcomed and spend time getting to know each other and Rishi, our spiritual teacher. Following this informal gathering, dinner is served and sleeping arrangements are made.

Saturday, the first day of camp, will start promptly at 6AM. After breakfast the classes start with yoga and Puja and teaching will commence at 9AM, and continue till 3PM, and a short snack and lunch break will be observed in between.

SUMMER CAMP PHOTOS

After the classes with a snack, the children will be encouraged to relax with Rishi, by walk in the forest preserve, or play outdoors. The children attending the day camp are also encouraged to participate in outdoor activities. Around 6PM, they wash up, and usually there will be a campfire with roasting of marshmallows or a movie. Dinner is served, and children share stories, jokes, or fun activities and go to bed when tired.

On Sunday the classes again start with a Puja and Surya Namaskara (outdoors) and continue till noon. After lunch all of the religious camp participants and parents visit a temple to learn the virtues of praying and to understand the concept of idol worshiping.

Sunday evening, following their return, parents and other Hindu disciples gather for a spiritual discourse with Rishi followed by dinner, after which camp is dispersed.

The classes for the older children teach the basic concepts of our religion, including, but not limited to reasons for rituals, moral values, temple visits and prayers, with an emphasis on monotheism.

Also they are taught the Nine beliefs of Hinduism, how to perform the Ganesha Puja and to recite the Morning Prayer.

First Saivite Summer Camp June 9-11 – 2006

Rishi Thondunathan and Dayavati Murugan enlighten the children on the virtues of Hindu religion. Also Sivaayan and Ashvin celebrating their birthday



Second Saivite Summer Camp
June 15-17, 2007

Group photo with Rishi on the last day of camp. Also children are enjoying during break time



**Third Saivite Summer Camp
June 13-15, 2008**

Children learning the virtues of our religion



**Fourth Saivite Summer Camp
June 12-14, 2009**

Children learning the virtues of our religion and enjoying cultural activities



Fifth Saivite Summer Camp
July 23-25, 2010

*Campers visiting Sri Venkateswara Swami Temple-Balaji,
Aurora*



Sixth Saivite Summer Camp
June 18-19, 2011

Campers enjoying a picnic lunch





Seventh Saivite Summer Camp June 22-25, 2012

Campers enjoying a walk in the forest preserve and hay ride on a horse carriage



Eighth Saivite Summer Camp
July 26-29, 2013

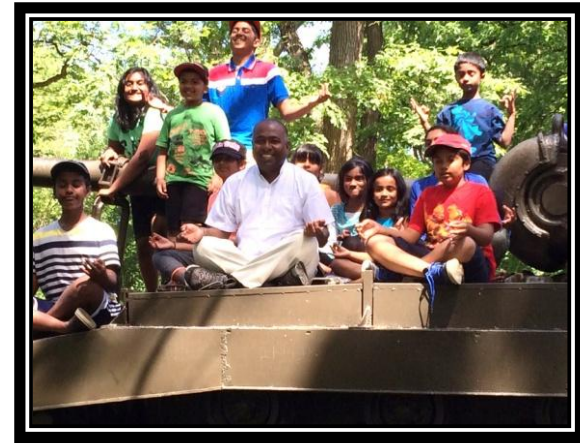
Campers having fun following the visit to Swami Vivekananda memorial and Hindu Temple- Rama, Lemont



Ninth Saivite Summer Camp
June 13-16, 2014

*Camp fire after a visit to Cantigny Park and First Division
Museum-Tank, Wheaton*





THE NINE BELIEFS OF HINDUISM

(For Children)

- 1) I believe in God, who is the creator of this world and Protector of my family.
- 2) I believe in Heaven where God live. Heaven is a beautiful place filled with love that I can feel within my heart.
- 3) I believe that I am a child of God like everyone else. God has given me a most powerful but invisible body called the atma or the soul that gives me strength and goodness.
- 4) I believe in karma - doing good and not bad. If I do good, good things will happen to me. If I do bad, bad things will happen to me.
- 5) I believe that God can hear me when I pray to him in my heart or in the temple.
- 6) I believe that I will see God one day if I am good to others, love people as well as animals and pray to God every day.
- 7) I believe to be happy I must listen to my father and mother and do what they say. I must pray to God everyday and ask Him to protect me and my family. This is called dharma.
- 8) I believe that I must not beat other people or animals, shout at others or think bad thoughts about others. This is called ahimsa. I believe this is very important otherwise God will be sad with me.
- 9) I believe that all religions are good and I must always respect my friends who pray to other forms of God.

A PRAYER TO BEGIN THE DAY

Prayers can be said in any language. Apart from traditional prayers, such as Sanskrit mantras or devotional hymns like thevarams and bhajans, you can also create your own personal prayer in the language of your choice.

Following is an example of a simple English prayer to Lord Ganesha that children can say when they wake up. First chant the following mantra to Lord Ganesha three times while visualizing Lord Ganesha.

Om Sri Ganeshaaya Namaha (say 3 times)

Then you read the following passage.

Dear Lord Ganesha,

Thank you for giving me this beautiful day and my wonderful family. I ask of you Lord Ganesha, that you keep me and my family safe and well today. I promise to be the best person that I can be today.

I will listen to my parents and be good and helpful to everybody else. Please help me with my studies and my chores. Thank you very much dear Lord Ganesha. Please bless me and my family.

Om Sri Ganeshaaya Namaha

Maha Ganapati Pancha Upachara Puja

Om Sri Ganapataye Namah suklambaradharam vishnum
sasivarnam Chaturbhujam prasanna vadanam dhyayet
sarva vighnopa santaye

Aum. O Lord dressed in splendid white, pervading all the universe, shining radiantly like the ivory rays of the full moon, having four mighty shoulders and a charming, happy face. We meditate on you, Lord, that all obstacles may be quelled.

Salute Lord Ganesha on the altar by holding your hands in anjali mudra, the prayerful pose. Then, while reciting the above verse, cross your arms before your face and tap your temples lightly with your knuckles three times, the left hand tapping the right temple and vice versa. This is a traditional way of supplicating Lord Ganapati. The place to knock is the bony, protruding part towards the front. Return your hands to anjali mudra while reciting the last words of the chant.

Om sri maha ganapataye namah: pushpam samarpayami

Offer a flower to Ganesha

Om sri maha ganapataye namah: dhupam aghrapayami

Offer incense to Ganesha. Circle the incense 3 times around Ganesha in a clockwise direction while ringing the bell.

Om sri maha ganapataye namah: dipam darsayami

Offer incense to Ganesha. Circle the incense 3 times around Ganesha in a clockwise direction while ringing the bell.

**Om sri maha ganapataye namah: maha naivedyam
nivedayami**

Offer food to Ganesha. Visualize Ganesha partaking of the food.

**Om sri maha ganapataye namah: karpura niranjana
darsayami**

Offer camphor light to Ganesha. Circle the light 3 times around Ganesha in a clockwise direction.

Yamas and Niyamas

There are ten yamas and ten niyamas. Yamas tell us what not to do. The niyamas (or religious practices) tell us what we should do. We should all memorize the yamas and niyamas. When we follow these practices, we are living a religious life. The yamas and niyamas were first written down in the *Vedas*. Hindus have learned and followed them for thousands of years.

Yamas

1. *ahimsa*: "Non-injury". I will not harm others by thought, word or deed.
2. *satya*: "Truthfulness". I will not lie or betray promises.
3. *asteya*: "Nonstealing". I will not steal, nor covet, nor enter into debt.
4. *brahmacharya*: "Divine conduct". I will control lust by remaining celibate when single, and being faithful in marriage.
5. *kshama*: "Patience". I will be tolerant with people and patient with circumstances.
6. *dhriti*: "Steadfastness". I will cultivate perseverance and overcome fear, indecision and changeableness.
7. *daya*: "Compassion". I will not be callous, cruel or have insensitive feelings towards any being.
8. *arjava*: "Honesty, straightforwardness". I will not deceive or do wrong.

9. *mitahara*: "Moderate appetite". I will not eat too much nor consume meat, fish, fowl or eggs.
10. *saucha*: "Purity". I will not be impure in body, mind and speech.

Niyamas

1. *hri*: "Remorse". I will be modest and show shame for misdeeds.
2. *santosa*: "Contentment". I will seek joy and serenity in life.
3. *dana*: "Giving". I will tithe and give generously without thought of reward.
4. *astikya*: "Faith". I will believe firmly in God, guru and the path to enlightenment.
5. *Isvarapujana*: "Worship of the Lord". I will cultivate devotion through daily worship and meditation.
6. *siddhanta sravana*: "Scriptural listening". I will study the teachings and listen to the wise of my lineage.
7. *mati*: "Cognition". I will develop a spiritual will and intellect under the guru's guidance.
8. *vrata*: "Sacred vows". I will fulfill religious vows, rules and observances faithfully.
9. *japa*: "Recitation". I will chant mantras daily.
10. *tapas*: "Austerity". I will perform sadhana, penance, tapas and sacrifice.

Lord Ganesha

Lord Ganesha was created by God Siva. He is Siva's son.

He helps to remove obstacles and to solve problems in our life.

We always worship Him first.

He helps us to be happy.

Lord Ganesha has an elephant's head.

Everybody loves an elephant. Pray to Lord Ganesha.

He helps you to study well in school and to have good friends.

You come close to Him when you are kind and helpful.

Always sing in praise of Him.



Lord Siva



Lord Murugan

Lord Murugan was also created by God Siva.

He is Siva's second son.

He is the God of yoga, healing and teaching.

He helps us understand our religion.

We Pray to Lord Murugan to help us to peaceful and good.

He uses a spear of light to protect us from bad things.

His peacock is beautiful and colorful just as our Saiva religion is beautiful and colorful.



Lord Siva is God.

He created Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan.

He created people. He created the worlds.

He loves everyone. He is everywhere.

He is within everything. He protects us.

Do not ever forget Him. Worship Him every day.

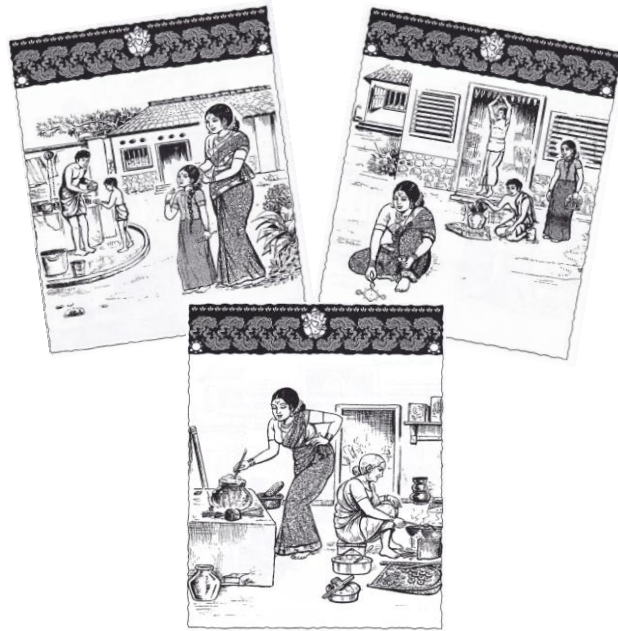
Lord Siva lives in the Sivaloka. It is the highest heaven world.

Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan also live there.

They are Mahadevas.

They help Siva to guide, guard and protect everything in the universe.

Tamil New Year



The New Year Day has come, in April.

We clean the house and the yard.

We decorate.

In the early morning we bathe.

Then we dress in new clothes.

Father decorates the door with mango leaves.

Mother draws kolams at the entrance with rice flour.

Daughter Kamala brings flowers in a basket.

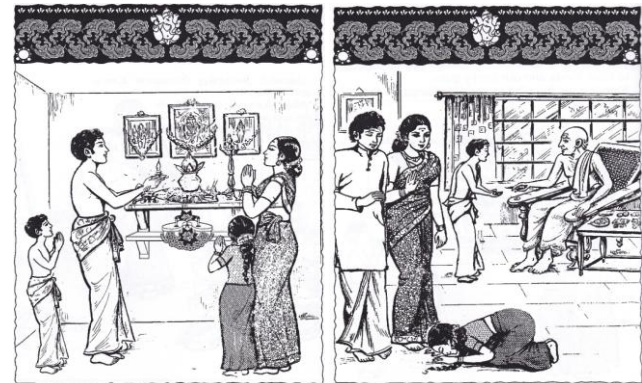
Son Kumar prepares the kumbha to welcome the New Year.

On New Year Day we prepare special food.

Mother makes sweet rice.

Grandma prepares vadai cakes.

Many visitors come to eat with us.



On New Year's Day we do a big puja in our home shrine.

We make the Gods beautiful.

We light the lamps and incense.

We offer fruit, flowers and freshly cooked food to God,

Gods and our family guru.

Father does the puja to seek blessings for the coming year.

On this special day we prostrate to our parents,

to show our love and seek their blessings.

We give great respect to all our elders.

We receive gifts from the elders in our home.

Story of Nambi

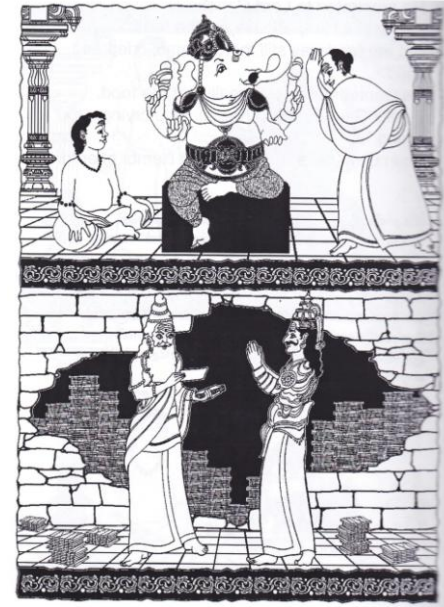
Nambi was a little boy. His father was a priest at the Ganesha temple. They lived in Tirunaraiyur, in South India, a thousand years ago.

One day Nambi's father went to another village. Nambi had to do the puja for Ganesha. He took sweet rice, modaka balls and fruit to the temple. He lit the lamps and chanted.



He prostrated to Lord Ganesha and asked Him, "Please eat the food". But the food was still there. Nambi cried and cried. He wanted Ganesha to really eat the food.

Finally Ganesha said, "Nambi, stop crying, stop crying. Then Ganesha ate the food that Nambi offered.

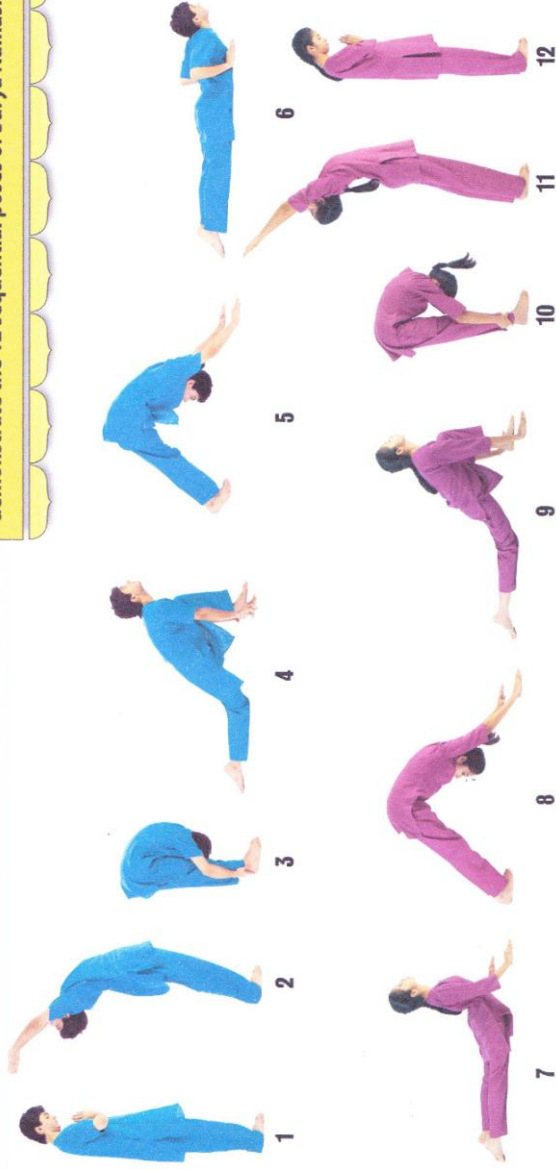


When his father came home, Nambi told him what had happened. But the father did not believe it. So Nambi took his father to the temple. There Nambi did the puja and again offered food. His father was amazed to see Ganesha eat it. The story of Nambi traveled far and wide.

Later in life we discovered hidden holy text with the help of King Rajaraja Chola. Nambi became a great saint and lived many years.

GREETING THE SUN

Jehan Lalkaka and Shamika Desai of Mumbai, both 16, demonstrate the 12 sequential poses of Surya Namaskara

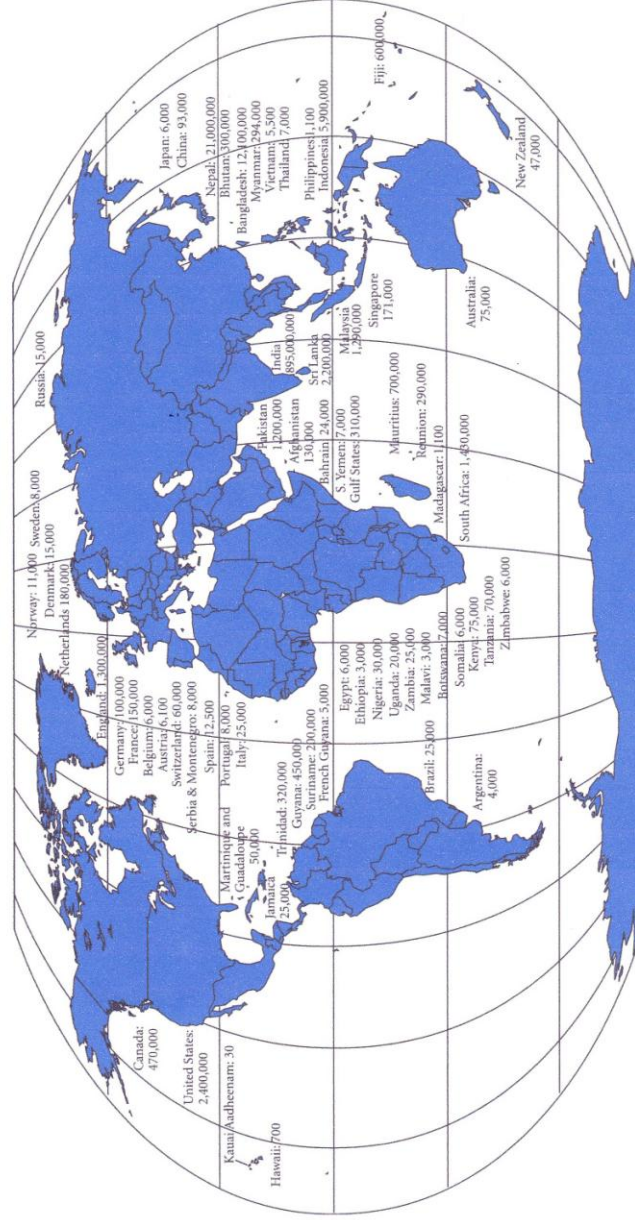


SURYA NAMASKARA

Hatha means "sun-moon" and is the name of the popular yoga exercises so common around the world. The name comes from the aim of balancing the male (the "sun" part) and female (the "moon" part) currents, mentioned in our next section on chakras. Each pose has a specific effect

upon the nerve system. The most famous set of poses is Surya Namaskara—the Sun Salutation, or greeting the Sun God. It tunes mind and body, while being a good workout! In India you can see people alone or in groups performing Surya Namaskara to the rising Sun.

Where Hindus Live Around the World



Campers Experience

Krithika Jeyendran

Board Member

I am the youngest member of the board and I was given the task of introducing summer camper's experiences over the last 9 years. We requested children who have attended the Saivite summer camp to share their experiences with us which led to the publication of this souvenir. As you read through these you will find how the camp has facilitated the environment for the children to experience the virtues of our religion.

Although my experience is biased as I am privileged not only as a participant, but in organizing the camp events and having the camp at our place. I can without hesitation vouch for the success of the camp and for celebrating the 10 anniversary is due to Rishi's simplistic way of presenting the concept of Hindu religion and its traditions. I not only learnt the basic concept of Hindu religion, but to appreciate its rich traditions. But spending the weekend with Rishi and other campers were very special. The evening group time to relax with Rishi was very rewarding as we were able to discuss freely our teenage stresses and issues we have with our parents. More importantly we were able to appreciate and relate to each other's concern which was rewarding and enjoyable.

Rishi has a unique way of guiding me to cope with the daily stress of growing up was extremely valuable. He has instilled in me the value of my faith and religious traditions that will be always be part of me.

Nimalan Sivarajan

University of Illinois, Chicago

I have enjoyed and gained much spiritual knowledge from the Tamil Saivite Foundation summer camps. My personal favorite Hindu philosophy that I have learned from Uncle Rishi is Karma, which is something I feel allows me to control my own destiny. The reason for this is that according to Karma, if I perform good deeds and work hard towards my goals then

I will have a better life in the future where I have achieved the goals that I have set for myself. From these summer camps I have also learned how to meditate, which has allowed me to stay more relaxed and better concentrate on one task at a time. Yoga was something that I found interesting, but at same time I struggled with it because it requires flexibility and balance, which I have neither of.

Besides gaining a better understanding of Hinduism, I also have many great memories from the camp, whether it was going on hikes or playing football during breaks. During these various activities, I was able to spend quality with all of the children and my peers, which is something that I normally do not get to do. This allowed me to get to know the children better. Also the camp had some big sibling little sibling aspects to it, like how my peers and I were able to help the children out with some of the challenges they faced. For instance if a child was struggling with yoga, I would try to break it down into smaller steps, so the child could do the yoga exercise. At the same time many of these children helped me also, whether it was being my partner for art & crafts activities, or doing something silly to make me laugh. So, this big sibling little sibling aspect of the camp was the greatest gift that I received from the Tamil Saivite Foundation summer camps.

Sivaayan Sivaparan

Jefferson Junior High, Naperville

The Hindu Saivite Summer camp that I attended was a great learning experience for me and all of my friends. We all had fun together, combining learning with a great time. I remember so much that has happened to me while I went to this summer camp for the past couple of years.

I was only 3 when I first attended, and now I'm 13. The first time I actually went to study at the Summer Camp, I learned many things. We learned about Lord Shiva and the other gods. About Dharma and Karma, and how it influences our everyday lives. Finally prayers, bhajans, and even Pujas. We also do fun things, like hiking in the woods behind Gandhi aunty and Jeyendran uncles' house, having water balloon fights, and best of all, making and having s'mores around a camp fire.

After my first year, I thought, "WOW! I'm so happy Uncle Rishi Thondunathan comes every year to teach us about our religion, and how to have fun while at it." It was awesome. Uncle Rishi brings his humor to summer camp every year I go there. I want to thank Uncle Rishi for coming each year, agreeing with us, and teaching us, especially joking around with us. I'm also happy to thank Jeyendran Uncle, Gandhi Aunty, and Krithika for hosting this Summer Camp, letting us stay there to learn and have fun, and also for putting up with us. THANK YOU so much!

Oveyaa Vignesh

University of Illinois, Urbana

Throughout the cumulative years of attending summer camp and religious functions, I have gained valuable insight and knowledge that has allowed me to mature and prosper as I reach adulthood. The experiences I will always cherish and remember are the ones that come from the strong connections I made with the little children that attended the camp, along with the bonds and friendships I made with my peers as well. As my journey through summer camp progressed, I learned about the different forms of God, the concept of "karma," and discovered the significance of reincarnation. As a child, I never understood what reincarnation meant or what really happened to an individual after life on earth came to an end. Now, I can proudly say that I completely understand the whole idea of reincarnation and am actually quite fascinated by it. It truly is an amazing process.

Being able to be a part of a camp taught by Uncle Thondunathan is a privilege and a significant educational experience that I am blessed to have experienced. I have enjoyed the company of my fellow peers, as well as the younger children and elders. By being a part of this great experience, I have enabled myself to grow as a person with the new knowledge I have gained, and am looking forward to sharing my new knowledge with others. Summer camp has not only widened my horizons, but has given me the pleasure to surround myself with the people I love most, while at the same time having fun while doing so.

Shweta Manoharan

Naperville North High School, Naperville

Ten years ago, I was given one of the greatest opportunities of my life. I was given the privilege to be one of the starting members of this camp that has since, forever changed my life. When I was seven years old, I became one of the two day campers. Being only seven years old and surrounded by people of older age, it felt quite intimidating, that is, in the beginning. Meeting someone new can either go fantastically well, or dreadfully poor, but with Rishi Uncle, everything just felt so right. He was kind, intelligent, and had a great sense of humor, which made getting to know him so much easier. Since then, our relationship has forever grown and I am honored to call Rishi Uncle one of my dearest friends.

People on the outside see this camp as a way for children to learn more about their religion, but it is so much more. We not only learn, but we also laugh, cry, and create bonds that last an eternity. I have gained so much from this camp that I can't even express all of them. This camp, these people, Rishi Uncle, it has created a sort of Safe Haven where we don't judge, hurt or criticize one another. We instead cherish the presence of each other because all of us campers understand that we will not be under the same roof until the following year, which makes each experience even more memorable. I am so very thankful to have been given this life changing opportunity because even though this camp is only a short 3 days, it lasts a life time.

Tharsica Vignesh

Aurora University, Aurora

My experiences at the Saivite summer camp were filled with many fun and educational experiences. I will always remember the first summer camp 10 years ago. It was structured, yet it lasted for days. Uncle Thondunathan is an extraordinary teacher that made classes enjoyable. He would always teach us Hinduism at a kid level. We had movie a nights and had so many times filled with inside jokes, "hippie love." These 10 years have passed by so fast, that I was extremely shocked that it's been that long. It's amazing to see that the camp is filled with new faces every year. Each year the camp has unique experiences. Like the year we went hiking and had a hay ride. Or the time I was yoga Instructor which I'll only volunteer as tribute if needed for this year. Or maybe if we get enough requests in Uncle Thondunathan will be the yoga instructor this year! Overall, I'm proud to say that I was one of the few children that were at the start of the camp. It's amazing to see the growth of the camp, as well as the community that is growing with it. I am looking forward for the next couple of years to come!

Dhiren Rajmohan

Metee Valley High School, Aurora

When I first came to summer camp 10 years ago, my perspective of this camp felt very unexciting and I was not interested in learning my own religion. As I grew older, my mind altered and I really wanted to learn Hinduism and all the beliefs during this camp. Uncle Rishi has taught me the prayers on Hinduism and how it can be applied in the real world today. Not only Hinduism, but he gives us lectures on life and how to become a better

person. Within the 3 days of the summer camp, we also go on field trips, hiking, and roast marshmallows in the campfire. Late night stories to pulling pranks and bugging Uncle Rishi make this summer camp the most memorable experience ever.

Ujiith Yogeswaran

Fischer Middle School, Aurora

Summer camp, a camp taken each year about religion and it is the best ever. It's held by Rishi uncle, Gandhi auntie, Jeyendran uncle and Krithika. Over the past few years I have been in summer camp I had learned many things and had a lot of fun. Although we talk about some religion which might be boring for some of us but it is quite interesting. In summer camp we learned about different religion and how they connect to each other. Also Rishi uncle taught us bajans, how to pray and do yoga. We played a lot in the house, played outside, watched movies, had a campfire, went hiking, and most importantly we pulled pranks each other.

The first person to talk about is the one and only Rishi uncle who teach us about religion. He is the funniest, coolest, and the most awesome person I have ever met. Every time he was with us he joins in with the fun we have even though he is an adult and becomes a kid himself. He shares a lot of hilarious stories with us and helps us pull a prank on somebody including the other adults. The next two people I like to talk about are Gandhi auntie and Jeyendran uncle. They are both the most nice and kind people (mostly Gandhi auntie though) and they let us to stay at their house for summer camp. They are also very patient with us whenever we make a mess. Another person I like to talk about is our lovely Krithika. She is definitely our type, cares about all of

us, and we all have fun with her. Also finally last but not least our little Percy. We would spend a lot of time with him especially the girls who spend the most time with him. We also like all the other who helped the summer camp to function, I can't wait to go the next time.

Praveen Sahadewan

Kennedy Junior High, Naperville

By going to the summer camp, I learned lots of things about Hinduism that were educational and fun. The lessons I learned at the camp have impacted my life. I learned many things about Hinduism and its values, beliefs, and actions that will help you, such as dharma, meditation, and yoga. I also learned how those concepts may help me in the future, how I can use them, about my duty in the world, how I am accomplishing it by working hard in school, and what I need to work on for this concept, such as respect towards family. I also learned how following the duties that my age group is given will make me a better person.

One of the things that made the Hindu camp stand apart from a day of studying Hindu lessons on a computer is that it was fun. I got to meet one of my favorite teachers, Rishi Thondunathan at the Hindu camp and he is one of the nicest people I have ever met. He taught me and all the other kids about Hinduism and made learning enjoyable for us by adding jokes and interesting stories to his lessons. Another thing that makes the classes fun is that we conduct many field trips and have time to play with each other. One of the best parts of the camp, was staying overnight at Uncle Jay & Aunty Gandhi's house and enjoying movies with my fellow campers. This is how the Hindu camp impacted me and why it was enjoyable.

Aerahan Skanthakumar

Kennedy Junior High, Naperville

I feel lucky that I have the opportunity to attend Uncle Rishi's Saivite Summer Camp. I want to thank Uncle Jeyendran and Aunt Gandhi to give us the chance to enjoy the camp at their house. From summer camp I learned a lot of things about religion. I learned about karma and that there is an equal and opposite reaction to everything you do. It helped me do more good things and it helped me in my Science class because I could remember Newton's third law by thinking of Karma. I also learned about all the different things that Ganesha symbolizes. You can compare all the different religions to different ways to get to the top of the mountain which is becoming a perfect person. I also learned that god is inside of every living thing. Visualizing that you are going to complete your goal can help you complete that goal. Visualization helps me because it helps me do things well when I visualize the good thing I want to do. I visualize that I was going to get a hit at by baseball game and I ended up getting a hit. When I realized god is inside of every living thing I started eating less meat. When I realized that there is more than one way to become a perfect person it helped me in Math because I was able to use more than one method to solve problems. When I realized everything Ganesha has stands for something I started treating things more carefully because I realized everything has a purpose.

I also liked about summer camp that the teacher Uncle Rishi is nice and caring and kind. He used his own time just to teach us kids about religion that you can use in your daily life. I felt good and lucky when I found out that Uncle Rishi was a great person and gave a lot of money for charity and helped out many different people especially in Sri Lanka. I wasn't surprised that a noble person was teaching us religion. I liked many things about summer camp. I liked the breaks that they gave in between which let us soak the information that has been given to us into our

minds. The breaks were perfectly placed so right when I was getting tired it was time for a break. They also found a way to make things interesting. It was also explained so it was very easy to understand. I think this because Rishi uncle made very simple comparisons to things in real life to things that are in religion. Uncle Rishi inspired me to donate my birthday money to kids in Sri Lanka so they could get fun toy and school supply. I am attending summer camp every year. The three day camp helps us learn a lot of things and revising it every year. We also won't forget the information because we spent more time learning it and let all the information settle in our minds well.

Overall I think religion camp was a really good idea and I personally enjoyed it and I look forward to going there every year.

Subash S. Skanthakumar

Kingsley Elementary School, Naperville

We learn about are religion {Hindu} at camp let's start with the gods. Many people think we respect a lot of gods but really it's only one god in different forms such as the god of the sky Zeus is his Greek form and Jupiter is his roman form. Except this god have a lot more forms such as Ganesha, Shiva, Vishnu, and Krishna. We also learn prayers and Pujas. We learned about Karma at camp If you do something good something good will happen to you BUT if you do something BAD something bad will happen to you it is like the GOLDEN RULE. TREAT PEOPLE THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED. We play during the breaks at camp.

Shama Skanthakumar

Kingsley Elementary School, Naperville

I am always looking forward to go for uncle Rishi's summer camp. It will be more fun and entertaining to stay during the night too. I think there will be a lot of fun things to learn about Hindu religion. I learned there is good Karma and bad Karma. Good karma means you are nice to everyone. Bad karma means you don't be nice to anybody. I also learned that even though you go in a different way than another person to reach the same mountain top you will end at the same point. We can explain this by saying there are a lot of religions even though people go a different path to reach the same supreme God. Another thing I learned is some bajans about different gods and I enjoy singing bajans. Also we learned about lord Ganesha. I also learned the mantra's to do puja for Ganesha. In the morning after I brush my teeth I recite daily prayers uncle Rishi taught in the camp and I also sing few songs and mantra for Ganesha. Now I am going to tell about what I enjoy about summer camp. I enjoy seeing and playing with my friends at camp. What I also enjoy about summer camp is that we get to roast smores on a campfire. Another thing I like about summer camp is we have water balloon fights. The last thing I like about summer camp is we sometimes hear stories from uncle Rishi.

Thivya Sivarajah

Twin Groves Middle School, Buffalo Grove

A Hindu proverb once said how, "There is nothing noble about being superior to some other man. The true nobility is being superior to your previous self." In the (going on) nine years that I have attended the Saivite Summer Camp, I have seen myself grow

in character by the lessons I have learned at camp. I have also gained more friends, more knowledge about my religion, and memories that will last me a lifetime. The Summer Camp was very helpful to me because, before I attended the camp, I wasn't quite sure about what exactly Hinduism was. Uncle Thondunathan, our guru at the camp, explains to us about what being a Hindu is all about. Uncle Thondunathan is also very patient with us if we don't understand a particular concept, and he uses many examples, including stories, to help us understand our religion. He is also a very funny and a great mentor for all the kids at the camp, and we always enjoy having him as our guru for our camp.

In addition to having an awesome teacher, I have a ton of friends at the camp. When we have free time, we normally explore the woods that are nearby or play some pranks on each other. One time, all the team leaders from the camp called everyone outside. We thought it was just another activity that we were going to do. Instead, it turned out to be a water balloon fight! All the team leaders were secretly filling up water balloons while everyone else had lunch. Someone even started to spray everyone with the gardening hose! In the end, everyone was dying of laughter and we were all soaked. Class can also be pretty funny too, since everyone is actively participating and sharing stories about the topic that we are learning.

Every moment I spend at camp always gives me another memory to cherish. I still can't believe that the Saivite summer camp is celebrating 10 years of spreading Saivite traditions! This camp has been a huge part of my life, and I hope it continues to touch other people's hearts as it has touched mine.

Dhareni Raveendran

Steeple Run Elementary school, Lisle

I am a Hindu and I believe in God who protects me and my family.

I pray to lord Ganesha, Shiva, Muruga, and goddess Parvathi every day at home.

God gives me strength and goodness.

I believe in doing good and not bad.

I believe all religions follow different paths to see the God and I respect other religions.

Vishali Sutharsan

Owen Elementary, Naperville

In the past years I had attended many special events which were held by Chicago Saivite Tamil Foundation. But my most special event was my first Saivite Summer Camp. I would like to share some of my experience with you.

Saivite camp will be held for three days including night stayed events to teach Hindu religion concepts to kids. I was kept on waiting for those 3 days since the time I knew that I am going to participate. Because out of many other summer camps this one was very new to me and I was curious to learn about my religion. My parents allowed me to participate only for day time camp. I was wondering and excited how it would be. So I woke up early morning and got ready to go Gandhi Auntie's house with my dad.

The day began with "Surya Namaskaram" which means Greeting of Sun. We all followed Rishi uncle's clear instructions. As a first time I learned this in my life. It made me feeling calm when I

took deep breath in and out. We did a lot poses in "Surya Namaskaram". Then Uncle Rishi asked us to sit crisscross and close our eyes thinking about God Ganesha sitting on a river bank or anything our favorite view. This was what I learned is how to meditate to make our mindfulness. It makes us to stay focused and calm.

Then there was a series of lectures about Hindu religion concepts. Uncle Rishi explained what a religion is, why a religion is important to a person, giving respect to other religion and etc. Not only that I learned "Karmas" in Hindu religion. This was completely new subject to me and was a little hard to understand at the beginning. Finally I learned that karma means when we do good actions (good karmas) good results come back to us and when we do bad actions (bad karmas) bad results come back to us. This camp taught me that we should not harm others by our deeds or our words or even by our thoughts. Until I learned about these I thought my religion was only going temples and praying God.

We had bajans and sang many religious songs. Even we visited "Swami Vivekananda Akshramam" which is next to Lemont Hindu Temple. There were big pictures of the Saint hanging on the wall. There it was another different experience. I learned who Swami Vivekananda is and what he did to the world. We meditated in that wonderful silent place. I felt warm, calm, good and peaceful.

Saivite camp not only had religious activities but there were some fun activities too such as nature walk, hayride and the camp fire. We had hayride from Gandhi Aunt's house to Forest Preserve. My favorite part was the nature walk. I really enjoyed when we went on a nature walk and hike at the Forest Preserve. I was happy as I held Gandhi Aunt's hand asking her the names of the plants and

flowers. In late afternoon under the camp fire we listened to stories from Rishi uncle. We had s'mores too. It was so interesting and fun with my friends. Apart from these the food was so much delicious for the lunch and snack time.

After this experience I am waiting for the next Saivite camp in each summer. So far I attended two camps. I hope I get to sleep and stay there for the full time event this year. I am old enough now for this. I really love Saivite camp events and enjoy them a lot. I wish the Saivite Camp a happy 10th anniversary and many more events in the future.

Ashen Rajmohan

Francis Granger Middle School, Aurora

I learned a lot of things about Hinduism and way of life that will help us lead an honest life, during the Summer Camp every year. We learned bajans, other people's experiences, yoga and religious beliefs. We went on hikes and we made Smores. We also watch a movie in summer camp. My favorite movie couple of years ago was 'Life of Pi'. I also enjoy the field trip that we do every year. I enjoy the Temple visit and the trip to the Cantigny Park. The vegetarian food that I eat during the Summer Camp is always delicious. I always look forward to the Summer Camp every year as it gives me energy, and I learn a little bit more about ways of life and about Hinduism every year.

Ashvin Rajmohan

Gwendolyn Brooks Elementary School, Aurora

I had so much fun at summer camp every year, and I have learned a lot about my religion. To be honest, before I went to summer camp I barely knew about my religion, I even tried to learn another religion by asking my friends. I became very desperate trying to figure out my religion. I did everything that I can but I couldn't find anything on my own. My brothers were already attending summer camp so I knew little bit about it but not enough. Finally, I was old enough to go! It was incredible. I learned about Hinduism, about god, history of our religion, and about Karma. Going home was the saddest part. I am very happy to share that experience with everyone.

Seyon Elankumaran

Vanhoosen Middle School, Rochester Hills, MI

Saivite camp has taught me many things about Hinduism. Before I came to this camp I did not know a lot about our religion. An example is the belief of reincarnation. Before I went to this camp I did not know we even believe in rebirth. Without this camp I would not know as much as I do now. I also learned about Dharma, and Karma. I also got to learn many new bajans which I did not know before. This made me do more prayers when I pray at home. Since I got more educated, it caused me to have more curiosity about our religion. I also had a lot of great experiences at camp. I remember the activities like making s'mores, going to the horse stables, and playing outside. It includes lots of fun, mixed with religion. I liked the camp since it balanced out fun and learning. This helped me not get bored during the camp. Overall this was a great camp, and I hope to come again soon. This was a

wonderful experience for me and thank you for making it happen. I also would like to thank Uncle Jeyendran and Auntie Gandhi for hosting this camp.

Diviya Sivakadachan

Granger Middle School, Aurora

I have learned a lot from Saivite Summer Camp. Our guru at the camp, Rishi Thondunathan, has taught us to respect our mom, dad, guru and God (Maatha, Peetha, Guru, Theivam). We also learned about the twelve beliefs of Hinduism. One of the beliefs is the existence of unseen spiritual worlds. We also believe in karma and reincarnation. I learned that when you die, your body will decay but the soul (atma) will proceed to the next body. I have heard many stories about saint and gods and goddesses but the one that was engaging is a story about how Shiva got a blue neck. The devas and the asuras wanted to churn the ocean for the nectar of immortality so they took a mountain and the king of serpents and churned but as they churned the poison from the serpent king came out and the devas and the asuras were scared so Lord Vishnu asked Lord Shiva to help them. So Shiva drinks the poison but Parvathi held the poison up the neck so the poison didn't go to his stomach. The poison turned Shiva's neck blue that is why he is at times called Neelakantha. We don't only learn about our religion, but we also learn to respect other religions and help those who are less fortunate. We do a lot of fun things at camp as well.

We go hiking in the woods and get to enjoy nature when left alone, unharmed. We see different types of birds and animals, trees, plant, mainly flowers. We went to Cantigny Park last year

and it was so fun. We walked through history and saw how soldiers sacrificed their lives for the country. We climbed tanks that our fearless soldiers used when they were in combat. The most fun thing is when we did the bonfire. We came outside the house and enjoyed some s'mores and talked with one another. We had fun telling stories and dancing.

The most important part was when we did the yoga which we did in the morning. We learned to meditate and on the last day we did a big pooja. Of course we had a lot of fun activities to do at camp and people made new friends but the main focus was on teaching the next generation about Hinduism so we can learn and practice the Hindu culture. I would like to thank our guru, Rishi, our founders Dr. and Mrs. Jeyendran, and my parents because they sent me to this wonderful camp. Saivite Summer Camp is one of the things I look forward to in every summer. Thank You!



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