

# WHYISHNAVE SUTHAGAR

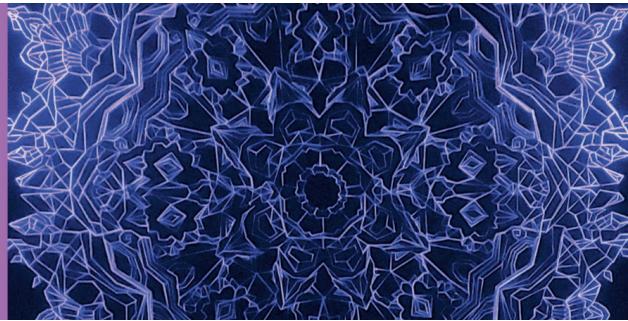
நினைவு | Ninaivu—

What We Remember, What We Release



Curated by Shannon Anderson

January 24 to April 12, 2026



Dear Amma + Appa,

*Over forty years ago, you both made the most difficult decision of your lives. You left behind everything you have ever known without hesitation. You never looked back, and I can only imagine the weight of that loss ... Thank you for giving me a life shaped by your courage, your love, and your unwavering belief in a better tomorrow.*

Love, Sinthu

The 1980s was a time of widespread migration for the Eelam Tamil community, who fled Sri Lanka amid a civil war that threatened their lives. Decades later, as families have settled in their new homes and worked hard to support new generations of Tamil Canadians, the memories of their home country and the impact of trauma still resonate. For her exhibition நினைவு | Ninaivu—What We Remember, What We Release, Mississauga-based artist Whyishnave Suthagar reached out to her Eelam Tamil community to develop a project that fosters intergenerational dialogue and communication as a path toward healing.

Through two series of prompts—one from parent to child, and one from child to parent—Suthagar invited families of first- and second-generation members of the Tamil community to write letters to each other. One set of letters, written by the first generation and addressed to their children, focuses on the experience of leaving their homeland of Sri Lanka to build a new life in Canada. These letters reflect on their migration experiences and describe the sacrifices made and the challenges faced in their journeys. The second set of letters are written by second-generation children and grandchildren and addressed to their parents or grandparents. These letters reflect on their relationships to their elders, including the experience of being raised in Canada by parents who came from Sri Lanka, the ways the parents' journey shaped their own, and what they hope to leave behind. Suthagar has engraved these letters onto plexiglass surfaces and illuminated them, each set of letters placed on opposing gallery walls, in a gesture of placing the first generation and the second generation across from one another. Together, they create a space for intergenerational

dialogue while standing in tribute to both the Eelam Tamil community and to the sacrifices made by all migrants. The series speaks to the shared but differently experienced journey of diaspora: what is inherited, what is grieved, and what is cherished.

At the heart of the gallery space glows a large Kolam-inspired mandala, which draws upon traditional Tamil artistic motifs to create a meditative environment. Within the centre of the gallery, the artist has created a space for contemplation and letter-writing, so that visitors can actively participate in this ritual of remembrance and release.

Through these gestures, the exhibition challenges conventional methods of memorialization by centering individual memories and intergenerational conversation—offering a space that honours both the stories of the past while fostering healing for the future. Grounded in the lived experiences and affective memory of Tamil families, *Ninaivu* operates as both a living archive and a sacred space while exploring themes of displacement, migration, inheritance, and reconciliation through an intimate and participatory framework.

Based in Mississauga, **Whyishnave Suthagar** is a Tamil Canadian artist and designer whose practice centres on creating immersive art installations and community-engaged work. She holds a BFA from McMaster University's School of the Arts and has pursued additional design studies at OCAD University. Her professional development includes participation in the 14.0 Remix Project and HXOUSE Re-Entry program. She is currently a Master of Architecture candidate at the University of Toronto.

Suthagar has exhibited extensively across Toronto and the GTA, with presentations at the McMaster Museum of Art, MUCH Music HQ, the Gladstone Hotel, Manifesto TO, the Drake Hotel, STACKT Market, the Museum of Contemporary Art (Toronto), Artscape Daniels Launchpad, the Toronto Distillery District, the Gerrard India Bazaar BIA, Critical Distance Gallery and the Bradley Museum. In 2022, she presented her largest-scale installation to date as part of Nuit Blanche (Toronto). Her practice has been further developed through artist residencies including Nuit Connects (Toronto) and an international residency in 2025 at Fondation Fiminco in Paris, France.



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