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UNAFRAID AND UNBOWED



## From War-Torn Beginnings to Tech Triumph:

The LTTE's Struggle  
with Nepotism:

**The Story of  
Charles Antony**

The Inspiring Odyssey of  
Dr Sabesan Sithamparanathan

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## Celebrating a Beacon of Resilience and Innovation: Dr. Sabesan Sithamparanathan

In our February 1st edition of the Jaffna Monitor, we are thrilled to present an exclusive interview with Dr. Sabesan Sithamparanathan, a Cambridge alumnus and luminary in the technology world. His remarkable journey from the challenging terrains of war-torn Jaffna to becoming the Founder and President of the multimillion-dollar company PervasID is not just inspiring; it's a testament to the boundless potential of the human spirit and intellect.

Recently honored with the OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) award in the King's 2024 New Year Honours List, Dr. Sithamparanathan's story stands as a beacon of hope and a vivid illustration of how education can be a powerful tool for transformation. His achievements are not just a personal triumph but a source of pride and motivation for countless individuals around the globe.

In the second part of our gripping series, "Anton Master Speaks," we continue our dialogue with KT Sivakumar, also known as Anton Master. A prominent early member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and a close associate of leader Prabhakaran, his insights into the organization are invaluable. Through these dialogues, we aim to provide our readers with rare insights into the history and inner workings of the LTTE, directly from a key figure in its history. This offers a unique opportunity to understand a pivotal chapter in our collective past from a first-hand perspective.

Our special feature this month includes an article by K.S. Lakshmi, an ex-leading figure of the LTTE. Writing under a pseudonym, Lakshmi shares profound reflections and experiences from a turbulent period in our history.

Additionally, our reporter's investigation into the burgeoning parking fee issue in Jaffna highlights the growing public discontent. The imposition of fees by the Jaffna Municipal Council is more than a mere inconvenience; it's a situation that demands immediate attention.

As we present these diverse and powerful stories, along with many more, we hope to offer our readers perspectives that enlighten, challenge, and inspire. Each narrative, in its own way, reflects the resilience and complexity of the human experience. We are honored to be the conduit for these voices and stories, and we thank you, our readers, for joining us on this journey of exploration and understanding.

Warm regards,

கணியன் பூங்குன்றன்  
**Kaniyan Pungundran**  
Editor- Jaffna Monitor



INTERVIEW



# From War-Torn Beginnings to Tech Triumph: The Inspiring Odyssey of Dr Sabesan Sithampanathan



BY:

**Our special correspondent**

In an exclusive interview with the Jaffna Monitor, we delve into the remarkable journey of Dr Sabesan Sithampanathan, Cambridge alumni, a notable figure in the tech world and the Founder & President of the multimillion-dollar company PervasID, a Cambridge University spin-out and Fellow at Girton College Cambridge University. Dr. Sabesan is renowned for his ground-breaking innovation in a nearly 100% accurate battery-free real-time location tracking system, a technology extensively utilised across various sectors, including retail, healthcare, and aviation.

His recent prestigious accolade, the OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) award in the King's 2024 New Year Honours List, is a testament to his significant contributions and is often seen as a stepping stone towards the esteemed 'Sir' title. Originating from the small town of Pallai in Kilinochchi in Sri Lanka, Dr Sabesan's early life was marked by the

backdrop of intense ethnic conflict and the onset of civil war, having been born in 1984, just a year after the escalation of brutal ethnic violence in Sri Lanka. His transition from the challenging circumstances to the esteemed halls of Cambridge University is not just a story of personal success but an embodiment of indomitable spirit and resilience.

His journey from a young boy in war-torn Sri Lanka to a globally recognised tech leader exemplifies the transformative power of education. His story demonstrates that education is not just about gaining knowledge; it's a key to unlocking potential and driving societal progress. His hard work, dedication, and perseverance serve as an inspiration, proving that with access to education, any obstacle can be surmounted, and remarkable achievements are possible.

In conjunction with growing PervasID, Dr Sabesan has been advocating for the

industry through thought leadership and speaking appearances. He was also elected to Enterprise Fellow at Girton College Cambridge in 2022. He is passionate about mentoring students to discover entrepreneurship and develop the key skills needed to commercialise their research discoveries. He is also a passionate ambassador for STEM education in schools in the UK and his home country of Sri Lanka.

Dr Sabesan has been awarded numerous accolades, including the Royal Academy of Engineering Entrepreneurs Award, Royal Academy of Engineering Young Engineer of the Year and Silver Medal, The UK ICT Pioneer of Connected World Award, Sir George Macfarlane Medal, as well as a Queen's Award for Enterprise: Innovation. He was also elected Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), and he was named in Business Elite's "40 Under 40" in 2023.

Join us as we explore the inspiring life story of Dr Sabesan Sithamparanathan, from his humble beginnings in war-torn Sri Lanka to his illustrious career in the United Kingdom.

### **How do you feel about receiving the OBE award recently? Could you also, explain the importance of the OBE for our readers who might not be completely aware of what it signifies?**

Receiving the OBE, or Officer of the Order of the British Empire, marks an immensely prestigious moment for me, symbolising not just a personal achievement but also the collective hard work and innovative spirit of the entire PervasID team. This esteemed award, conferred by the British monarch, on the advice

of the UK government, recognises individuals for their substantial contributions in various fields, including arts, science, charitable work, and public service.

I am honoured for my contributions to wireless technology and promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects in education. The latter is particularly rewarding to me, as it also highlights my efforts to increase female participation in STEM fields. Receiving the OBE transcends a mere accolade; it embodies a profound responsibility. It inspires me to continue my pursuit of societal betterment and to keep pushing the boundaries of innovation. This honour reinforces my commitment to enhancing STEM education and fostering diversity within the technology sector. It's about paving the way for future generations, inspiring them to make meaningful contributions to their fields and society at large.

### **How did your childhood and upbringing shape your story of passion, resilience and determination?**

I grew up in a middle-class family and faced a pivotal change in my life when I lost my father at the age of 10. We were living in Pallai at the time, and his passing forced us to relocate to Chavakachcheri with the help of my grandmother and Periyamma (mother's elder sister).

My academic journey wasn't smooth sailing from the start. I failed my 5th-grade scholarship exam, and throughout my early school years at Chavakachcheri Hindu College, I was not particularly a serious student as I was playing lots of cricket and other games in my early days, with no interest in being a successful



student. Despite my aptitude for mathematics and science, my performance in other subjects was mediocre, often ranking towards the middle to bottom of my cohort. Cricket was my passion during those years. I occasionally skipped tuition classes to play cricket, where the winning team earned a tennis ball.

However, a turning point came in the 8th standard when I became acutely aware of my family's financial situation. This realisation marked a drastic shift in my priorities. I gave up cricket, which I loved deeply, and other leisure activities like socialising with friends. I dedicated myself entirely to my studies. This laser focus paid off in my Ordinary Level (OL) exams, where I achieved 8 Distinctions and a Credit, the latter in English, which was a challenging subject for me.

After securing these results, I moved to Jaffna Hindu College for my Advanced Levels, choosing the Maths stream.

Reflecting on this later in life, particularly during a leadership program at Harvard University, I learned about the concept of 'crucible moments' - pivotal experiences that shape a person's life. From Barack Obama to Steve Jobs, successful individuals have all faced such defining moments. For me, the loss of my father and the ensuing financial difficulties



in my family served as my crucible moment, deeply influencing my path and achievements.

### How did your experiences and memories as a student at Chavakachcheri Hindu College shape you into the person you are today?

My time at Chavakachcheri Hindu College played a foundational role in shaping who I am today. The teachers there were instrumental in our development, ensuring that we excelled not only academically but also in cultivating strong moral and ethical values. I fondly remember my class teachers Ravikumar sir and Nageswaran



*Young Sabesan Sithamparanathan  
Receiving an Award at Chavakachcheri  
Hindu College Prize Giving Ceremony*



*A/L Student Sabesan Sithamparanathan Receiving an Award  
at Jaffna Hindu College, Early 2000s*

sir and, science teachers Rajalingam sir and Parameswaran sir, maths teacher Arudjothi Varnan sir, social/history teacher Sarveswaran sir and many others. Known for their strict discipline and teaching methods, they importantly instilled in us the values of honesty, integrity, and high moral standards. They were not just educators; they were role models, living examples of the virtues they taught. Their teachings have stayed with me throughout my life. For instance, when Nageswaran sir taught us epic pieces of literature like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, he did so by interpreting these stories with real-life meanings. He drew parallels between these ancient narratives and contemporary life, emphasising the importance of honesty, moral and uprightness. The values of honesty, integrity, and moral fortitude that I learned there have been fundamental to my personal and professional development, significantly aiding me in both spheres of life.

### **Could you elaborate on your experiences and memories from your days at Jaffna Hindu College?**

I joined Jaffna Hindu College after completing my Ordinary Level exams at Chavakachcheri Hindu College. I studied there for two years.

This period was crucial in shaping my academic aspirations, as it introduced me to a highly competitive environment. At Jaffna Hindu College, top-performing students, including myself, were grouped in the 'C' section classroom. This strategy of assembling bright students together was something I later observed at Cambridge University as well. It's a technique that enhances students' intellectual capacity and fosters a spirit of healthy competition. Jaffna Hindu College ignited a real desire in me to learn and compete.





The atmosphere there was uniquely conducive to focusing on studies. It helped me channel my energies towards achieving academic excellence.

However, I firmly believe that academic prowess alone isn't sufficient; good character development is equally vital. Likewise, having a good character without academic skills isn't enough either. Chavakachcheri Hindu College played a significant role in building my character, while Jaffna Hindu College honed my academic skills. I often reflect on my educational journey by saying that Chavakachcheri Hindu College gave me my heart, and Jaffna Hindu College gave me my brain. This combination of character and intellect has been pivotal in my overall development and success.

**Did you attend tuition classes for your Advanced Level examinations?**

I attended tuition for my advanced-level examinations. For Physics, I studied from Kumaran sir; for Chemistry, it was Maniyam sir and Rajaram teacher (sadly passed away), and for Maths, my tutor was Senthilraj sir. These four teachers played a crucial role in my AL education, each contributing significantly to my understanding and proficiency in their respective subjects. My Maths and Physics skills were key to my inventions later at Cambridge University, and I am most grateful to Kumaran Sir and Senthilraj Sir for laying the foundation for me.

**Could you share the story of how you ended up at Cambridge University?**

My journey to Cambridge began with academic success in Sri Lanka. I achieved straight As in all three subjects in the Advanced Level exams



*Princess  
Royal Anne  
Congratulating  
Sabesan  
Sithamparanathan  
on His Election  
as a Fellow of the  
Royal Academy of  
Engineering, 2023*

in 2003 and enrolled at Moratuwa University, the country's top engineering university. As an Advanced Level student, I initially aimed to excel at Moratuwa. However, my ambitions grew while I was there; I became aware of globally esteemed institutions like Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, MIT and Stanford, and I developed a strong desire to join one of these prestigious universities. I wanted to get into one of these universities badly. I pursued every opportunity that came my way-applied to a few universities in the UK with help from my aunty's (mother's younger sister's) family in the UK. This led to a scholarship offer from the University of Sheffield. So, I took the risk of leaving Moratuwa and coming to the UK, ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities it presented.

At Sheffield, where I pursued a BEng (Hons) in Electronic Engineering from 2004 to 2007, I initially faced significant challenges with the English language. I had completed my schooling in Tamil. Despite these obstacles, I remained focused on my goal of excelling academically to secure a place at Cambridge with a full scholarship. I was ranked 1st in the

department every year and was awarded the Sir William Siemens Medal in 2007 for being one of the country's top 18 science and technology students.

My efforts paid off when I was accepted into the University of Cambridge for an MPhil in 2007, under the supervision of Professor Ian White, with Cambridge Commonwealth Trust, Corpus Christi College Scholarship and EPSRC (TINA and Boeing) Studentship. At Cambridge,

I immersed myself in both academics and extracurricular activities. I was elected as the Sports Representative of the Middle Combination Room (MCR) at Corpus Christi College and also served as the cricket captain, reigniting my passion for the sport that I had set aside during my school years in Jaffna. Following my MPhil, I continued at Cambridge for my PhD in Electronic Engineering from 2008 to 2010 on the subject of 'Passive RFID real time sensing system for intelligent infrastructure'. Cambridge University represented more than just a place of learning for me; it was a transformative juncture that reshaped my life's path. The



*Sabesan  
Sithamparanathan  
in Casual  
Conversation with  
King Charles III,  
Celebrating the  
Queen's Award  
for Enterprise in  
Innovation, 2021*



University's distinguished history, marked by the achievements of 96 Nobel laureates, speaks volumes about its stringent academic standards and its ability to inspire. During my time there, Cambridge sharpened my focus, fuelled my passion, and deepened my drive and vision for success. In this environment, I realised my true potential, setting the groundwork for the successes that would follow in my career. I was also very fortunate to have had exceptional mentors here.

**As the Founder of PervasID and a key figure in developing innovative tracking technology, could you share with us your journey from academia to entrepreneurship?**

When I arrived at Cambridge University, my original ambition was to pursue a career in investment banking, primarily attracted by the lucrative salaries offered by major firms such as J.P. Morgan and Morgan Stanley. These companies were known for offering starting salaries of around 60,000 pounds per year to

fresh graduates, which was about twice what a newly qualified electronics engineer might expect to earn.

However, a pivotal shift occurred during my PhD, sponsored by Boeing, where I tackled the airline industry's costly issue of lost luggage, responsible for around 400 million dollars in annual losses globally. This challenge led me to invent and develop the world's most accurate battery-free radio frequency identification (RFID) tracking solution, a solution that later became the basis for my company, PervasID.

My ground-breaking innovation described in my 300-page thesis, condensed into 100 pages, secured patent rights, marking my foray into entrepreneurship. As Founder & President of PervasID, I successfully grew PervasID into a multimillion-dollar global enterprise, transforming multiple sectors, including retail, healthcare, industrial, logistics and supply chain. For instance, in healthcare, my solution enables the precise tracking of hospital assets to ensure that mission-critical medical devices are available at the right place and time for robust and efficient care. The need for this level



of traceability of medical devices has been particularly evident in the COVID-19 pandemic. The solution is predicted to save £billions for hospitals and will save lives.

This journey highlights the importance of adaptability and the willingness to explore new avenues, essential traits for any entrepreneur.

## **How did you navigate the unfamiliar territory of entrepreneurship?**

When I initially ventured into wireless technology and invented the world's most accurate battery-free tracking system, I was quite new to the world of entrepreneurship. The idea of turning an invention into a business venture was a foreign concept for me. I saw my invention as something that required nurturing and development, much like the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning. These programs were invaluable, teaching me how to evolve a lab idea into a commercially viable business. I pursued funding and mentoring from the Royal Academy of Engineering's Enterprise Fellowship Scheme to spin my innovations out of the university lab and into a commercial endeavour, PervasID in 2011. However, my education in entrepreneurship continued well beyond that. In 2018, I engaged in the Authentic Leader Development program at Harvard Business School and the SME Leaders Award program at the Royal Academy of Engineering. These programs refined my leadership skills.

In my opinion, with dedication and effort, any skill can be acquired, and Genius is not an inherent trait but the result of persistent hard work and commitment. When I began my company, I had two inventions.

Today, I am credited with five, which I see

as a testament to the skill of inventing being honed over time and becoming a part of one's identity. This journey has taught me that entrepreneurial skills are not innate but can be learned and improved upon. It's a journey marked by continuous learning, adaptation, and striving for improvement, essential in my evolution from a PhD student to a technology entrepreneur.

## **How did being born and raised amidst the brutal war in Sri Lanka affect or shape you as a person?**

The war had a profound impact on me. Just months before my Ordinary Level (OL) exams, our family was forced to leave Chavakachcheri due to the conflict and relocate to Vadamarachchi. Amidst this upheaval, I left behind all my study materials – notes, papers, and books. In Vadamarachchi, I relied on borrowing books and notes from friends to prepare for the exams. Despite these challenges, I managed to achieve good results.

Looking back, I realise that this experience, a direct consequence of the war was instrumental in shaping my character and resilience. These qualities, forged in times of adversity, have continually influenced my life. The experience also instilled in me a certain bravery and the ability to face and overcome challenges.

Life would likely have been more straightforward if I had continued my studies at Moratuwa University. I could have settled in Jaffna with a government job. However, I chose a different path filled with risks and uncertainties. For instance, I was not fluent in English when I came to the UK. But, similar to my experiences during the war, I viewed this language barrier as a challenge to overcome, not a setback. The



resilience I developed during the war years was invaluable. It taught me to face adversities head-on and to persist despite difficulties. This mindset significantly influenced my ability to adapt to new environments, pursue higher education abroad, and eventually succeed in my professional endeavours.

**What are your current initiatives for giving back to the Jaffna society, and could you elaborate on the specific projects you've started or are planning to initiate?**

I am currently engaged in two main initiatives

in Jaffna. The first is titled 'Realising Your Potential at an Early Stage and Achieving Success'. I firmly believe that every child is born with innate talents, and in this, I don't think the divine has shortchanged anyone. The crux of the issue is that many children do not get the opportunity to discover and nurture these talents. It's the fortunate 1% who, either by chance or guidance, realise their potential early and go on to make history. However, this doesn't mean the rest cannot achieve similar feats. Figures like Steve Jobs, Sir Isaac Newton, Bill Gates, and many other notable achievers realised their true potential early in life, which was crucial to their success. Therefore, I've initiated programs in Sri Lanka to help students discover and cultivate their innate abilities from an early age.

My second project focuses on mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs. This initiative is in collaboration with Jaffna University. We aim to support talented individuals with innovative ideas or inventions but lack the know-how to transform these into successful entrepreneurial ventures.

By providing mentorship, we hope to guide them to becoming successful entrepreneurs. My vision is for Jaffna University to become a breeding ground for entrepreneurs, emulating the culture of innovation and enterprise fostered by leading universities like Cambridge and Harvard. Through these efforts, I hope to contribute to a future where Jaffna and its youth play a pivotal role in shaping a progressive and innovative society.



# Parking Pandemonium in Jaffna: Jaffna Municipal Council's Parking Fee Fiasco



BY:

**Our Reporter**

Residents and visitors of Jaffna are expressing growing concerns over the recent implementation of parking fees by the Jaffna Municipal Council. Reports indicate that individuals leaving bicycles or motorcycles in the Jaffna town streets, even briefly to visit

shops, are being approached by unidentified persons demanding parking fees.

This new practice has been especially prevalent in the town area of Jaffna, where individuals unexpectedly confront commuters with receipts ready to collect fees for parking two-wheelers. This has led to significant inconvenience for those needing to make multiple stops across various streets, as they are required to pay a fee at each location.





What's troubling is the lack of clear identification or official authorization of these fee collectors, who claim to represent the Jaffna Municipal Council. This ambiguity raises questions about the legitimacy and management of the collected funds.

The issue has escalated recently, reflecting the poor administrative oversight by the Jaffna Municipal Council representatives and relevant government officials. A notable incident occurred during the Nallur Festival, where a major street closure led to increased congestion and distress among attendees. This incident highlighted the arbitrary and disruptive nature of the council's decisions.

In a time when the general populace is already burdened by rising prices and increased service taxes, this additional financial imposition for basic activities like parking is seen as unreasonable and exploitative. It echoes the

sentiment of adding insult to injury for the already struggling local community.

Concerns are mounting over the accountability and transparency of these practices. The responsibility for addressing these issues rests with the Commissioner of the Jaffna Municipal Council.

Driven by their frustration, a few residents of Jaffna have jokingly proposed a more orderly approach, suggesting the establishment of official toll booths at the city's gateways, equipped with a transparent and equitable system for entry fees similar to those on highways. This tongue-in-cheek idea is in stark contrast to the current practice of haphazardly imposing parking fees at every possible location.

The Jaffna Municipal Council has yet to respond to these concerns, leaving residents and visitors uncertain and frustrated as they navigate the city's streets.



*LTTE Leader Prabhakaran with His Elder Son Charles Anthony, Circa 2006*

# The LTTE's Struggle with Nepotism: The Story of Charles Anthony



BY:

**K.S. Lakshmi**

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) youth wing's state conference in Salem, Tamil Nadu, was marked by the attendance of Inbanithi, great-grandson of late Kalaingar Karunanidhi. This event has stirred debate in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, and among the Tamil diaspora, focusing on DMK's leadership succession pattern. Critics highlight a lineage pattern from Karunanidhi to his son Stalin, then to Stalin's son Udhayanidhi, and now Udhayanidhi's son Inbanithi. This issue is notably contentious among supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

in the diaspora, who have been vocal on platforms like Facebook.

Whether right or wrong, in DMK, at least, leaders and other positions are chosen through elections democratically. But has any organisation that fought for Tamil Eelam- a separate country for Lankan Tamils, ever elected its leaders democratically? Especially the LTTE, which I was part of, never had even a hint of democratic principles at any time.

The leader of the LTTE, Prabhakaran, who called his organisation a liberation organisation, intended and acted towards making his son Charles Anthony the leader of the LTTE after him. Charles Anthony was





*Charles Anthony*



*Mathivathani, Wife of Prabhakaran, with Their Elder Son Charles Anthony, Circa 1986-87*

raised on the organisation's funds from birth. But was he trained like other fighters? Not at all.

Every individual who became a part of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), whether through voluntary enlistment or conscription, underwent a mandatory regimen of basic military training before being deployed to the frontlines. The assignment of leadership roles, such as commanders or other positions of responsibility, was contingent upon an assessment of their combat prowess and effectiveness in the field. Additionally, certain individuals, distinguished by their academic and educational backgrounds, were directly chosen for leadership positions. Nevertheless, these individuals were also required to demonstrate their capabilities in combat situations prior to their appointment. However, Prabhakaran established a specialised division known as the computer wing. He directly appointed his son, Charles Anthony, as the head of this new division. This division of the LTTE was notably allocated greater resources and power compared to other divisions.

The circumstances surrounding Charles Anthony's appointment as the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)'s computer division remain ambiguous. Unlike other members, he did not undergo the standard basic training protocol nor serve in any combat or administrative capacities within the organisation. Despite this lack of conventional experience within the LTTE's structure, in early 2006, the computer division was explicitly established for him. He was then assigned significant responsibilities and resources within this new division. This decision raises questions about the rationale and criteria used for his appointment to this prominent role.

The computer unit within the LTTE, primarily tasked with the production of IEDs, including Claymores and other explosives, was more than just a unit focused on computer-related activities. This division, known initially as the Technical Division, was under the adept leadership of Pradeep Master. He was an outstanding fighter, endowed with extensive technical knowledge, and was responsible for significant innovations. Pradeep Master,





*Charles Anthony, Prabhakaran, Younger Son Balachandran, Mathivathani, and Daughter Thuvaraga, on the Occasion of Balachandran's First Birthday*

a skilled warrior from the LTTE's fourth division, received his training in India, bringing a wealth of experience to his role.

However, his tenure in the division came to an abrupt end when he was sidelined and replaced by Charles Antony following the deliberate highlighting of certain shortcomings in his work. This move led to Pradeep Master being completely excluded from any active role within the organisation. He was 'frozen' in the LTTE's terminology, signifying complete exclusion from duties.

Charles Antony was appointed head of the computer division solely because he was Prabhakaran's son. Following his appointment, he showed no respect for any commanders and acted like an authoritarian. Other LTTE commanders hesitated to criticise Charles's actions due to his status as Prabhakaran's son. They even avoided mentioning Charles Antony's name in the organisation, respectfully referring to him as 'Thampi' (younger brother), a name once used for Prabhakaran in the early

stages of his military career. However, Charles Antony did not reciprocate any respect and treated all the commanders and fighters as insignificant.

Charles formed his own battalion, consisting of about 1,000 fighters, and equipped them with the most modern weapons. At one point, nearly half of the 'Tigers' resources were under Charles's control. However, despite his position as a designated leader and commander, Charles had no combat experience and never participated in significant battles. Furthermore, he refrained from sending his fighters into battle as well.

Velavan, who had once served as Prabhakaran's personal bodyguard, was later appointed in charge of Imran Pandian's battalion and had been acquainted with Charles Antony since the latter was around 12 or 13 years old. During a period of active combat, when Velavan's battalion was facing a shortage of personnel, he held several meetings with Charles Antony to request reinforcements



*Newborn Charles Anthony with Parents Prabhakaran and Mathivathani*



*Mathivathani, Thubaraga, Prabhakaran, Kutty (Prabhakaran's Communication Set Operator), and Charles Anthony*

from Charles's battalion personally. However, Charles consistently refused these requests. Velavan shared this incident with me in a personal conversation, clearly conveying his profound disappointment and heartbreak caused by Charles's behavior.

The first battle in which Charles Anthony participated was the Thevipuram battle in February 2009, just a few months before the LTTE was militarily vanquished. The battle was led by Sornam, with Charles Anthony serving as one of the commanders. During the combat, Charles Anthony and his troops fled the

battlefield cowardly, leaving behind approximately 500 advanced rifles. This act became a subject of ridicule within the 'Tigers' circles.

I can confidently state that no one in the 'Tigers' organisation speaks highly of Charles Antony. Prabhakaran appointed his inexperienced, ill-mannered, and unskilled son as his undeclared heir, entrusting him with half of the 'Tigers' military strength. In this context, the question arises: how can those who follow such a leader be justified in criticising DMK?

Currently, within the circles of LTTE supporters, there is a noticeable dependence on the figure of Dwaraka, who is represented as the daughter of Prabhakaran, to revive their movement. I am confident that she is not the actual Dwaraka, but these implications extend far beyond her identity. Using Prabhakaran's purported daughter, real or not, raises significant questions about

the LTTE's operational principles. This trend should be viewed as an idolisation of Prabhakaran and his family, deviating from the fundamental ethos of the movement. It brings to light a critical issue: Are LTTE supporters mirroring political parties like the DMK, which openly celebrate the legacies of their leaders?

**NOTE:** This piece was written by an ex-leading figure of the LTTE and translated by the Jaffna Monitor team. The author chose to publish under a pseudonym.



## Sinclair's Backflip Raises the Bar (and the Laughs) in Cricket Celebrations



In an electrifying display of talent and showmanship, West Indies' newest cricket sensation, Kevin Sinclair, etched his name into the annals of Test cricket history with one of the most spectacular wicket celebrations ever witnessed. Making his Test debut a memorable saga, Sinclair not only scored an impressive half-century but also clinched his first Test wicket, outsmarting the accomplished Australian batsman Usman Khawaja.

But the 24-year-old's magic moment didn't end there. The Gabba crowd was treated to a jaw-dropping spectacle as Sinclair performed an awe-inspiring backflip, a celebration that sent waves of excitement through the stadium. Renowned commentators were quick to express their amazement. Michael Vaughan exclaimed, "What a celebration!" Allan Border, a legend of the game, couldn't contain his admiration, declaring, "That has got to be the best (celebration) ever. That is the best ever." Ian Smith joined in, acknowledging, "We've just seen one of the great celebrations of all time."



This spectacular feat by Sinclair didn't just light up the stadium; it set the entire cricketing world abuzz, particularly among Sri Lankan fans, who found themselves in a whirlwind of hilarious debates and daydreams. They playfully pondered which of their own cricketers could match Sinclair's aerial acrobatics. The chatter swerved into a comical lane, with fans teasingly suggesting that before Sri Lankan players even think about attempting such gravity-defying stunts, they might want to brush up on something a bit more fundamental – like sprinting between the wickets without huffing and puffing!



*Prabhakaran Holding 'Daily News' Newspaper Featuring 'Prabhakaran Killed Rumour Sweeps the Country' (Below the Main Photo), Alongside PFLT General Secretary 'Yogi' Yogaratnam*

# Mahathaya's Saga:

## Power, Paranoia, and Politics in the LTTE

### R&AW's PsyOps and the Seeds of Paranoia



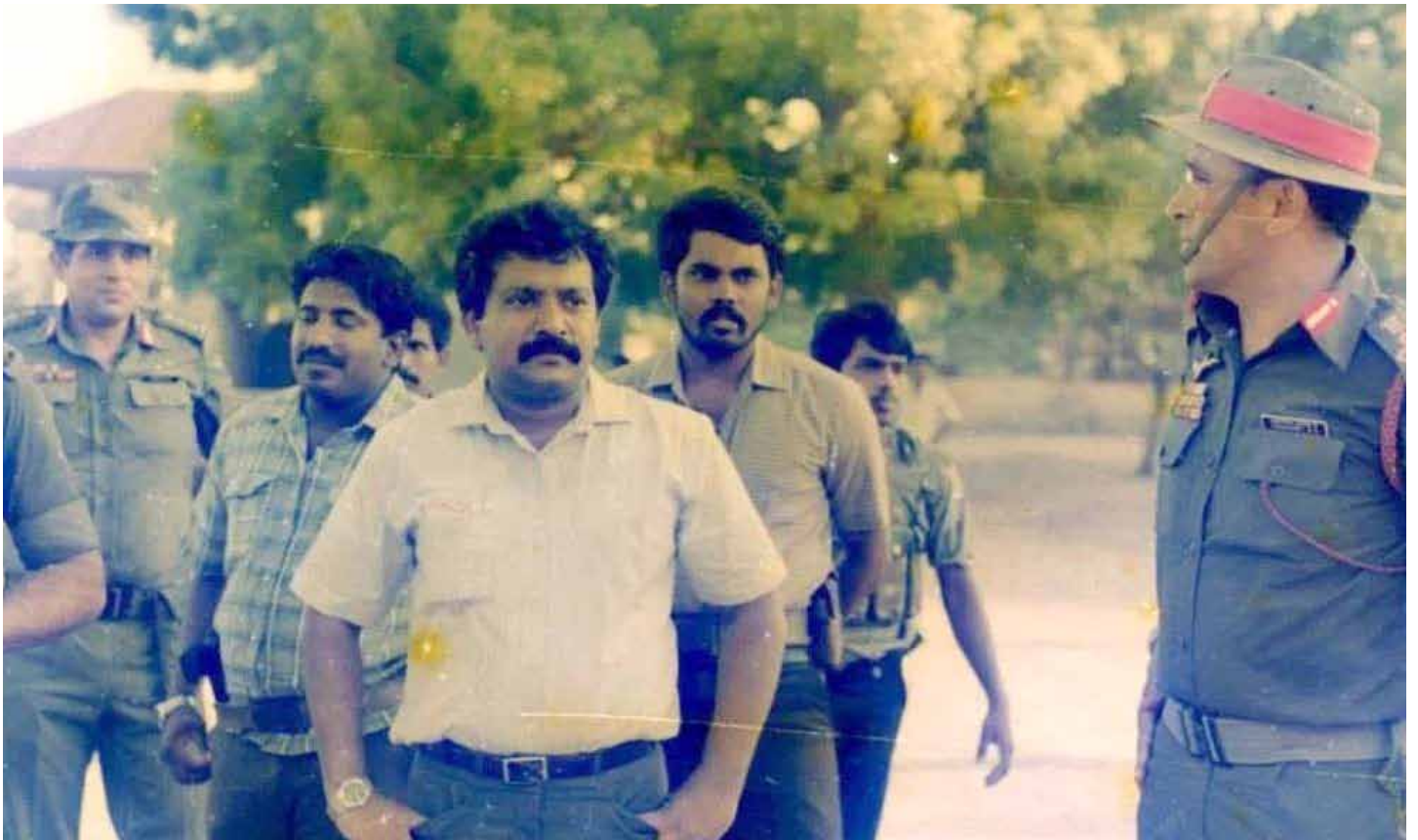
BY:

**Kaniyan Pungundran**

கணியன் பூங்குன்றன்

The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), serving as India's premier foreign intelligence entity, is understood to have executed a series of psychological operations aimed at the upper echelons of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). These operations, multifaceted in their approach, were strategically deployed across various fronts.





*Mahathaya, Prabhakaran, and LTTE's Trincomalee Chief Pulendran with IPKF Officers*

In one instance, On July 29, 1989, 'The Hindu,' one of India's most esteemed newspapers, published a news with the headline, "Prabhakaran Killed in LTTE Shootout." This headline cited Lalith Athulathmudali, the then Agriculture Minister and a prominent Sinhala nationalist politician. He claimed that allegedly intercepted radio messages from the LTTE indicated that Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader, had been assassinated by his second-in-command, Mahathaya, amid an internal power struggle. The report further emphasized that Mahathaya had become a key figure in the LTTE's military hierarchy, reportedly achieving parity with Prabhakaran in military matters.

Based on information from reliable insiders formerly close to the LTTE leadership, the Psychological Operations (PSYOP) engineered by R&AW successfully instilled deep-seated paranoia in Prabhakaran's mind. Consequently, even a small part of Prabhakaran began to consider the possibility

that Mahathaya might truly be conspiring against him, influenced by these strategically disseminated yet false reports.

This suspicion was further fueled by key figures close to Prabhakaran, including Tamilselvan, the then leader of the LTTE's political wing, Pottu Amman, the chief of the intelligence wing, and Shankar, also known as 'Thagaadu' Shankar. Their natural aversion towards Mahathaya and their vested interests played a significant role in escalating Prabhakaran's mistrust. Notably, Pottu Amman harboured ambitions to rise to Mahathaya's position within the LTTE, adding a layer of personal agenda to the unfolding drama.

Concurrently, Mahathaya voiced his disillusionment with the LTTE's leadership in internal discussions. This period marked a phase where he openly articulated his frustrations and disappointments, stemming from a variety of underlying reasons. His



# Prabakaran killed in LTTE shootout *The Hindu, July 29, 1989* *Weekly edition.*

COLOMBO, July 24.

The leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Mr. V. Prabakaran has been killed. The Sri Lanka Agriculture Minister, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali disclosed this news during a meeting with foreign pressmen in Colombo today.

Government sources said radio messages intercepted from the "Tigers" indicated that Mr. Prabakaran had been killed by his deputy Mahatiya during an internal power struggle.

The sources said posters had been displayed in the northern town of Vavuniya, a "Tiger" stronghold, calling on people to go into mourning for Mr. Prabakaran.

LTTE-watchers say that the basic difference between Mr. Prabakaran and Mr. Mahatiya was that Mr. Prabakaran opposed the line of talking with the Sri Lankan Government and collaborating openly with it against India and the other Tamil organisations. Mr. Prabakaran was also against lining up with the Sri Lankan President, Mr. R. Premadasa, in the course leading to a confrontation with India as he took the position that Sinhalese politicians could never be trusted. Besides, he was reportedly opposed to killing the TULF leaders, A. Amirthalingam and V. Yogeswaran, as he felt it would alienate the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and the people of India from the LTTE.



Mr. Mahatiya has, over the past two years, been the key figure in the military structure of the LTTE. He had become co-equal with Mr. Prabakaran, if not the main leader in the military

sphere while Mr. Prabakaran remained the apparent political leader. Various political elements in the North-Eastern Province had become aware of a situation of dual power at the top in the organisation which has gone on an extremely violent course over the past year and more.

According to Sri Lankan Tamil sources Mr. Krishnakumar alias Kittu, lieutenant of Mr. Prabakaran, was also feared killed in the shoot-out. The rival groups clashed in the Vavuniya jungles, from where Prabakaran and others were driven out before being shot.

The sources added that people at Ananthaperiyakulam village had been paying homage to Mr. Prabakaran by garlanding his portraits during the past two days.

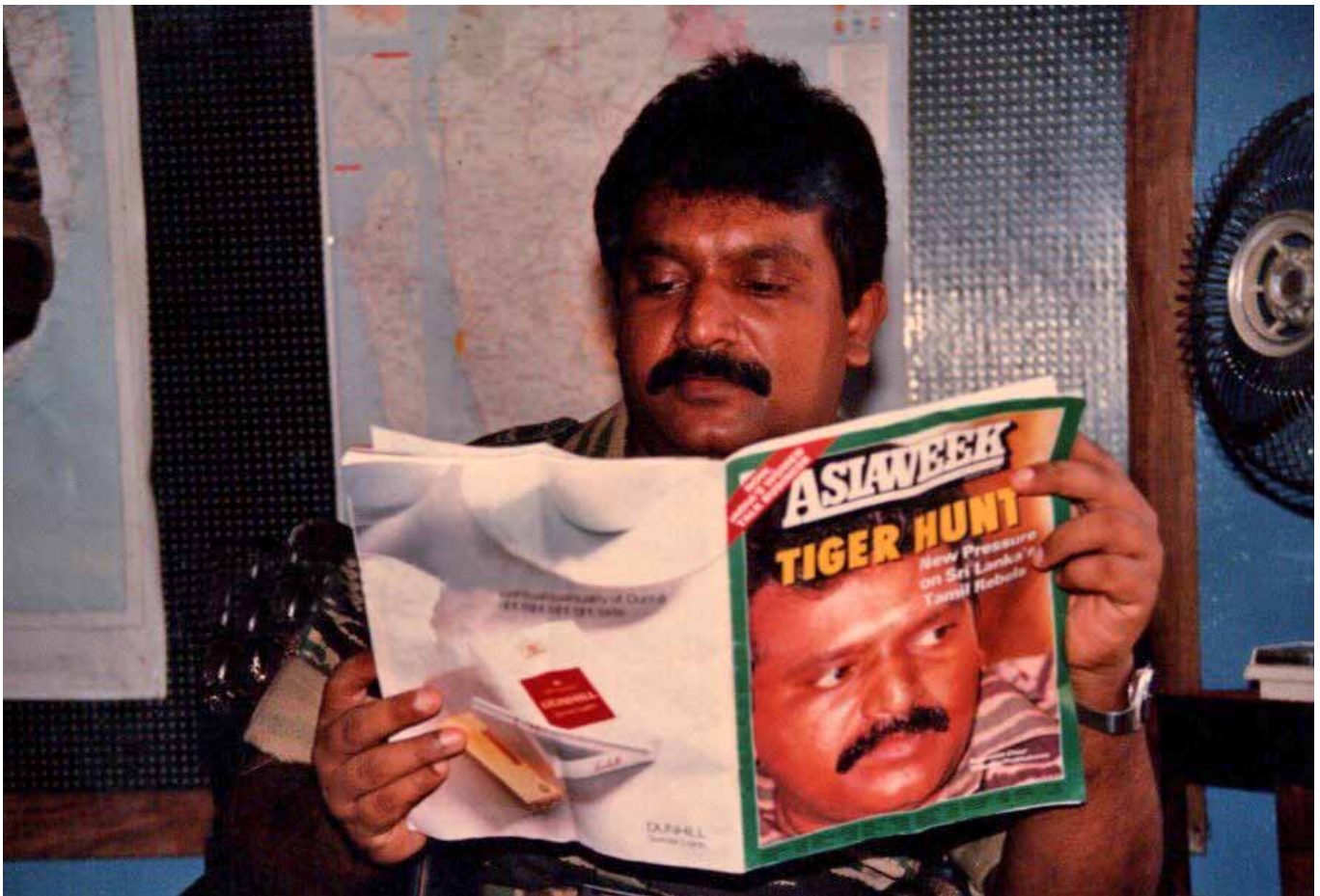
## PLOT leader shot dead

MADRAS, July 18.

Mr. K. Uma Maheswaran, leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) was shot dead in Colombo by as yet unidentified assailants on Sunday, reports from Colombo indicate.

With a heavy blanket of censorship in force, details of the murder are sketchy, but Uma Maheswaran, who was also known as "Mukundan" was apparently shot four times in the back as he was walking down the road at Frankfurt Place in Bambalipitiya.

*The Hindu Newspaper's Headline Reading 'Prabhakaran Killed in LTTE Shootout'*



*LTTE Leader Prabhakaran Reading an Asia Week Magazine with the Headline 'Tiger Hunt'*



criticisms, coming at a time of heightened internal distrust, only served to exacerbate the tensions within the upper echelons of the LTTE.

## War Resurges, PFLT Disbands

On June 11, 1990, a significant shift occurred in the relationship between the Premadasa government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), marking the end of a period of relative calm and leading to the resurgence of armed conflict. The Sri Lankan military successfully captured key islands surrounding the Jaffna Peninsula, including Mandaitivu. This escalation of war resulted in the suspension of operations of the People's Front of Liberation Tigers (PFLT), the political



*Sunthari*



*LTTE Theoretician Anton Balasingham with Sri Lankan President Premadasa During the 1990 Peace Talks*

faction of the LTTE. Consequently, LTTE members who were previously engaged in political activities under the PFLT banner returned to armed combat. Among the key figures who lost their life was Captain Sunthari (Udayalashmi Urrutrapati), who served on the Executive Committee of the PFLT and was also the sister of Idea Vasu, a notable member of the LTTE. Idea Vasu tragically lost his life in an explosion that occurred while he was refuelling an LTTE vehicle in Navatkuli, Jaffna, on February 14, 1987. Additionally, another sibling of Sunthari, James, an LTTE combatant, was killed in 1990. Captain Sunthari's own life came to a dramatic and tragic conclusion on December 19, 1990. In a grave turn of events, she died in Kurumbasiddy, Jaffna, after biting a cyanide capsule. Sources suggest that the death of Captain Sunthari, a member of the PFLT's executive committee who went to war and died, indicates that the organization effectively ceased to exist following the outbreak of war despite never being officially disbanded.

## PFLT: From Hasty Formation to Sudden Disbandment

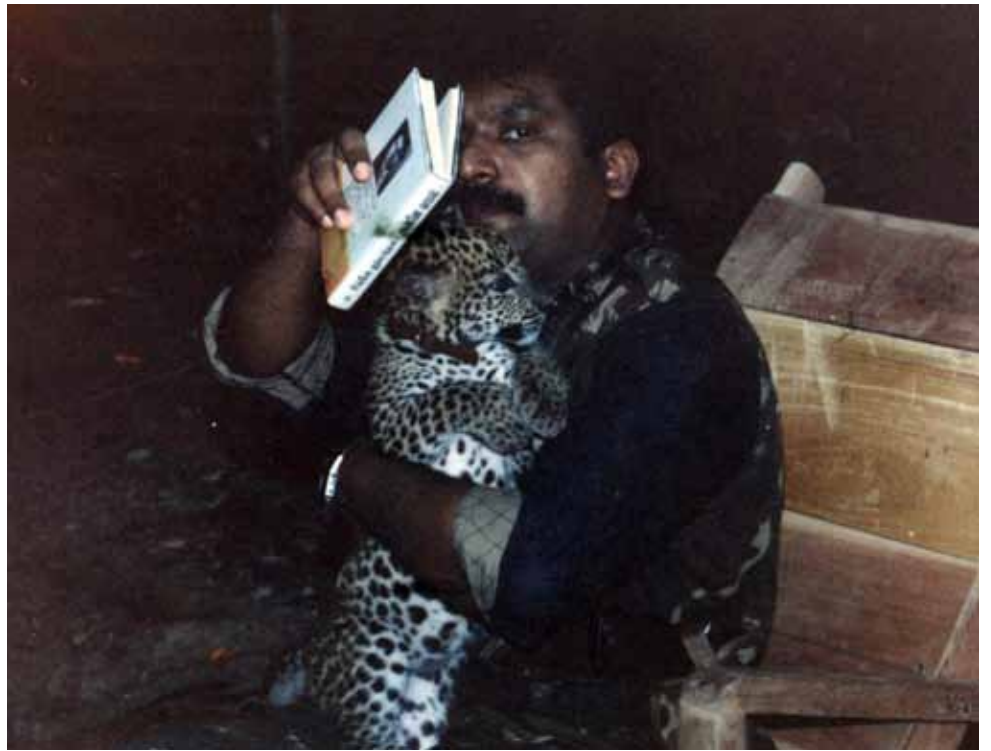
Credible sources who spoke to the Jaffna Monitor and were present during the

formation of the PFLT reported that the party was established quite abruptly and not in a serious manner. Specifically, the party was conceptualized during a lunch meeting at Prabhakaran's base, 'Punithabhoomi,' in Nittakaikkulam, Mullaitivu. This development followed discussions between LTTE representatives and envoys of President Premadasa. The Sri Lankan government delegation had suggested that the LTTE form a political party to advance ongoing negotiations further.

Eager to expel Indian troops from the country, Prabhakaran sought to ally with the Sri Lankan government under Premadasa. After being briefed about the discussions, he quickly established the PFLT, appointing Mahathaya as its founder and leader and Yogi Yogarathinam as its secretary. Furthermore, leaders from the LTTE's district political wings were appointed to the Executive Committee.

To officially register the political party, a larger executive committee was necessary. As a result, Sunthari and Jeya, a prominent LTTE member who now resides in Canada, were also appointed to the central committee by Prabhakaran. However, the source emphasised Prabhakaran's apparent lack of genuine commitment to both the party and the peace talks.

An insider within the LTTE told the Jaffna Monitor that the informal disbanding of the LTTE's political party, the PFLT, occurred as abruptly as its formation. In a move



*Prabhakaran at His Base 'Punithabhoomi' in Nittakaikkulam, Mullaitivu, Holding the Book 'அன்னை வயல்' – The Tamil Translation of 'Mother Earth' by Chingiz Aitmatov, and a Leopard Cub*

characteristic of his autocratic leadership style, Prabhakaran one day summoned his senior officials and declared the immediate cessation of the PFLT's operations. He ordered the closure of all party branches and directed that representatives serving the public be relieved of their duties. Notably, Mahathaya, the founder and leader of the PFLT, was given no explanation or opportunity for discussion regarding this decision. The source further indicated that Prabhakaran's unilateral action deeply disheartened Mahathaya.

The same source also shared a noteworthy story with the Jaffna Monitor, revealing that Prabhakaran had intentions to reignite the war earlier. However, he delayed his plans as the LTTE was expecting a significant sum of money amounting to crores from the Premadasa government. The transaction was being given to Jude, a prominent member of Mahathaya's faction within the LTTE. Prabhakaran reportedly waited for the funds to be securely transferred to the LTTE before initiating conflict, which eventually erupted on June 11, 1990.





*Sri Lankan President Meeting with LTTE Delegation in 1989; Sajith Premadasa (Extreme Right), Son of President Premadasa, Current Leader of Samagi Jana Balawegaya and Opposition Leader of Sri Lanka, in Attendance*

## Dissonance and Disappearance of Mahathaya

During this period, Mahathaya notably receded from the public eye, as observed by sources and reported in the Jaffna newspapers. He was conspicuously absent from media coverage in Jaffna. While he had a personal security detail of many LTTE cadres, Mahathaya limited his public appearances, often accompanied by just a few of them. He deliberately avoided public events, especially those attended by Prabhakaran.

Sources within the LTTE, speaking to the Jaffna Monitor, indicated a growing rift between Mahathaya and Prabhakaran. They were reportedly not on speaking terms, with Mahathaya expecting Prabhakaran to initiate a conversation while Prabhakaran awaited Mahathaya's approach. Opinions varied on the nature of this disagreement – some likened it to a minor family dispute, while others considered it more serious.

Credible reports suggested that Pottu Amman, head of the LTTE's intelligence wing, exploited this discord, systematically disparaging

Mahathaya to Prabhakaran. Mahathaya, described as both adamant and naïve, seemed either oblivious to the brewing conspiracy or chose to disregard it.

A former member of Mahathaya's faction, who served in a communications capacity, inadvertently overheard conversations by the LTTE's upper echelons suggesting an impending move against Mahathaya and his team. Recognizing the peril, he sought reassignment to the front lines. Speaking to the Jaffna Monitor, he expressed that his proactive decision likely spared him from the fate that befell many in Mahathaya's faction. Had he not taken this action, he believed he would have been ensnared by Pottu Amman's intelligence network, leading to his eventual arrest and execution, a fate endured by hundreds of fighters from Mahathaya's group.

The situation escalated dramatically on the night of August 2 and 3, 1993. In a meticulously executed operation resembling a full-scale military assault, the LTTE apprehended Mahathaya.

*To be continued.....*



# ICJ's Limited Ruling in the Israel-Hamas Conflict



BY:

**Our Special Correspondent**

On January 26, in a noteworthy session at The Hague, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) promulgated six urgent directives targeting Israel amidst its continued conflict with Hamas in Gaza. This significant ruling was handed down as the ICJ began to deliberate on the serious allegations of genocide made by South Africa against Israel. This matter has attracted extensive global attention. Notably, the ICJ's ruling did not extend to commanding a cessation of military activities or curtailing any further military escalation. Furthermore, the ICJ stopped short of prescribing actions against individuals accused of genocide. This aspect of the ruling brings into sharp relief the constraints of the ICJ's powers, underscoring the court's limited authority in enforcing such directives.





South Africa, in its 84-page lawsuit filed last December, accused Israel of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention during the war on Gaza, which began on October 7, 2023. The allegations, which Israel firmly rejects, citing self-defence measures against Hamas, have led to this unprecedented legal scrutiny.

The ICJ's ruling, a concise 45-minute judgment, confirmed its jurisdiction over the case. Among the measures ordered, Israel is mandated to prevent acts outlined in Article 2 of the 1948 Genocide Convention. This includes abstaining from acts that could result in killing or causing harm to Palestinians, ensuring the delivery of essential services and humanitarian aid to Gaza, and preventing the destruction of evidence of war crimes.

Notably, the court did not address all of South Africa's requests, such as suspending military operations or preventing any escalation of military activities. This selective adherence to the requested measures has raised questions about the extent and impact of the ICJ's provisional orders.

The binding nature of the ICJ's interim ruling, while legally obligatory for UN member states, poses a challenge in terms of enforcement. The ICJ lacks direct enforcement mechanisms, placing the onus on international cooperation and potential intervention by the UN Security Council (UNSC). The role of the US, a close ally of Israel, becomes pivotal here, especially given its history of vetoing resolutions against Israel.

Looking ahead, Israel is required to submit a report by February 26 detailing its compliance with the ICJ's orders, followed by a response from South Africa. This process sets the stage for further assessments and deliberations, potentially leading to additional measures or rulings.

Amid these developments, the situation in Gaza remains tense, with humanitarian concerns escalating under the shadow of continued hostilities. The ICJ's focus on punitive measures for incitement to genocide and its special reference to comments by Israeli officials indicate a rigorous approach to the allegations.

# ICC Ruling and Tamil Politicians' 'Fairytale' Justice Quest on Global Stage



BY:

**S. Navarathnam**

On January 26, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a landmark decision regarding the ongoing conflict in Gaza. This ruling, while acknowledging the severity of the situation, did not extend to ordering a halt to the attacks but rather emphasized adherence to international laws pertaining to genocide and war crimes. This decision has profound implications, especially for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, who have been promised justice and intervention by international courts by their so-called politicians.

The ICC's ruling reflects the complex dynamics of international law and politics. It subtly suggests that the resolution of internal conflicts is often expected to come from within the nation rather than through international intervention. This point is crucial, particularly in the context of Sri Lanka's internal ethnic conflict. The court's reluctance to directly intervene in the Gaza conflict, despite the apparent humanitarian crisis, underscores the limitations of international bodies like the United Nations and the ICC in addressing

civilian casualties and resolving internal disputes.

For the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, this ruling is a stark reminder of the realities of international politics and law. It casts doubt on the promises made by some Tamil nationalist politicians, who have long assured their constituents of securing justice through international legal avenues. The ICC's decision in the Gaza case suggests that such assurances might be overly optimistic, if not entirely misleading. This realization is sobering for the Tamil community, which has endured long-standing conflict.

Moreover, the ICC's stance in the Gaza case serves as an indirect message to other communities in similar situations. It highlights the importance of internal dialogue and negotiations with national governments to address grievances. The Sri Lankan Tamil community's reliance on international courts for justice might need to be reevaluated in light of these revelations.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE ARE SOLELY THOSE OF THE AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE JAFFNA MONITOR.**



# Anton Master Speaks:

Former Military Office Chief  
of LTTE Shares His Untold  
Story with 'Jaffna Monitor'



## Part- 2



BY:

**Kaniyan Pungundran**

கணியன் பூங்குன்றன்

### Rapid Surge and Leadership Crisis in Tamil Militant Groups Post-1983

KT Sivakumar, also known as Anton Master, is a prominent early member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and a close associate of leader Prabhakaran. He significantly contributed to the LTTE as a member of its Central Committee and as the founder and head of the Military Office (MO), enhancing the group's military effectiveness. Known for his reticence in media interactions, Sivakumar prefers 'dialogues' over interviews. The following is a part of a series of dialogues I had with him, providing rare insights, which will be featured in the forthcoming issues.

After the ethnic riots of 1983, all the militant organizations, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), and



*From left: Pathmanaba (EPRLF), Balakumar (EROS), Prabhakaran (LTTE), and Sabaratnam (TELO) in a casual photo at Hotel Presidency*



**Photo at Hotel Presidency, Chennai, April 11, 1985: ENLF Leaders Sabaratnam (TELO), Pathmanaba (EPRLF), and Balakumar (EROS) Unite with Prabhakaran (LTTE) in Their Quest for Eelam. Later, Sabaratnam and Pathmanaba were killed on the order of Prabhakaran, while Balakumar disbanded his EROS, accepting Prabhakaran's leadership to save his life, and became a part of the LTTE.**

□ தமிழீழ விடுதலை இயக்கம் (TELO) □ ஈழ புரட்சிகர மாணவர் இயக்கம் (EROS) □ ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணி (EPRLF) □ தமிழீழ மக்கள் விடுதலைக் கழகம் (PLOTE) □ தமிழீழ விடுதலை இராணுவம் (TELA) □ தமிழீழ விடுதலைப் புலிகள் (LTTE) □ தமிழீழ இராணுவம் (TEA) □ புரட்சிகர ஈழ விடுதலை இயக்கம் (RELO) □ தமிழீழ தேசிய விடுதலை முன்னணி (NLFT) □ தமிழ் மக்கள் விடுதலை முன்னணி (PLFT) □ தமிழீழ விடுதலை தீவிரவாதிகள் (TELE) □ தமிழீழ புரட்சி அமைப்பு (TERO) □ தமிழீழ விடுதலை கெரில்லாக்கள் (TELG) □ தமிழீழ செம்படை (RFTE) □ தமிழீழ தேசிய இராணுவம் (TENA) □ தமிழீழ பாதுகாப்பு படை (TEDF) □ தமிழீழ கெரில்லா இராணுவம் (GATE) □ இலங்கை விடுதலை தமிழ் இராணுவம் (IFTA) □ தமிழீழ புரட்சிகர மக்கள் விடுதலை இராணுவம் (TERPLA) □ கழுஞ் படை (EM) □ தமிழீழ விடுதலை நாகம் படை (TELC) □ தமிழீழ கொமாண்டோக்கள் (TEC) - உட்பட பல்வேறு இயக்கங்களும் தனி மனிதர்களும் 'தமிழீழம்' என்ற இலக்கிற்காக 'ஆயுதப் போரைத்' தொடங்கியிருந்தார்கள்.

**Prominent Tamil Militant Movements in Sri Lanka, Active During and Beyond the 1983 Ethnic Violence Period**

Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS), experienced exponential growth. These groups grew disproportionately large, a situation not fittingly described by the Tamil phrase 'விரலுக்கேத்த வீக்கம்' (a swelling that fits the finger), their expansion was beyond what was manageable. Many people joined these movements, and their leaders quickly became seen as heroes.

However, the mindset of those who joined after the 1983 riots was predominantly marked by a mix of desires for revenge, anger, confusion, and an overestimation of Indian support and training. Joining these movements became a matter of pride. Yet, there was a general sentiment akin to, 'I don't know where we're going, but judging by the size of this crowd, it must be good!' kind of கும்பலில் கோவிந்தா mentality, or "Following the crowd enthusiastically."

Everyone knew there was a need to fight back, but there was uncertainty about who the enemy was, who to target, and who were allies. Knowledge about the Geneva Conventions, war crimes, or crimes against humanity was virtually absent.

Before the 1983 riots, the LTTE and other groups were relatively small and manageable. The mistakes and errors committed were minor. However, after the riots, it became the responsibility of these movements' leaders



to properly guide the significantly larger number of Tamil youths who had joined. Unfortunately, all these leaders were incapable and immature to lead such a vast group effectively.

### **Prabhakaran's Tragic Rigidity: Dragging a Race to Conflict**

The liberation struggle should have been more flexible. Leading liberation movements with an 'Eelam or nothing' attitude, as Prabhakaran did, is not viable. Prabhakaran believed that anyone deviating from the goal of Tamil Eelam was a traitor, a stance that was misguided. However, he remained steadfast in his goals and never wavered from his beliefs or ideology. He maintained the same ideology from the start of his struggle until his death. His belief that sacrificing one race for liberation led to numerous tragedies

Prabhakaran was indeed prepared to die in the war, but he had no right to drag an entire race to death with him. This was his significant mistake. Nevertheless, I still regard Prabhakaran as an honest man. Unfortunately,

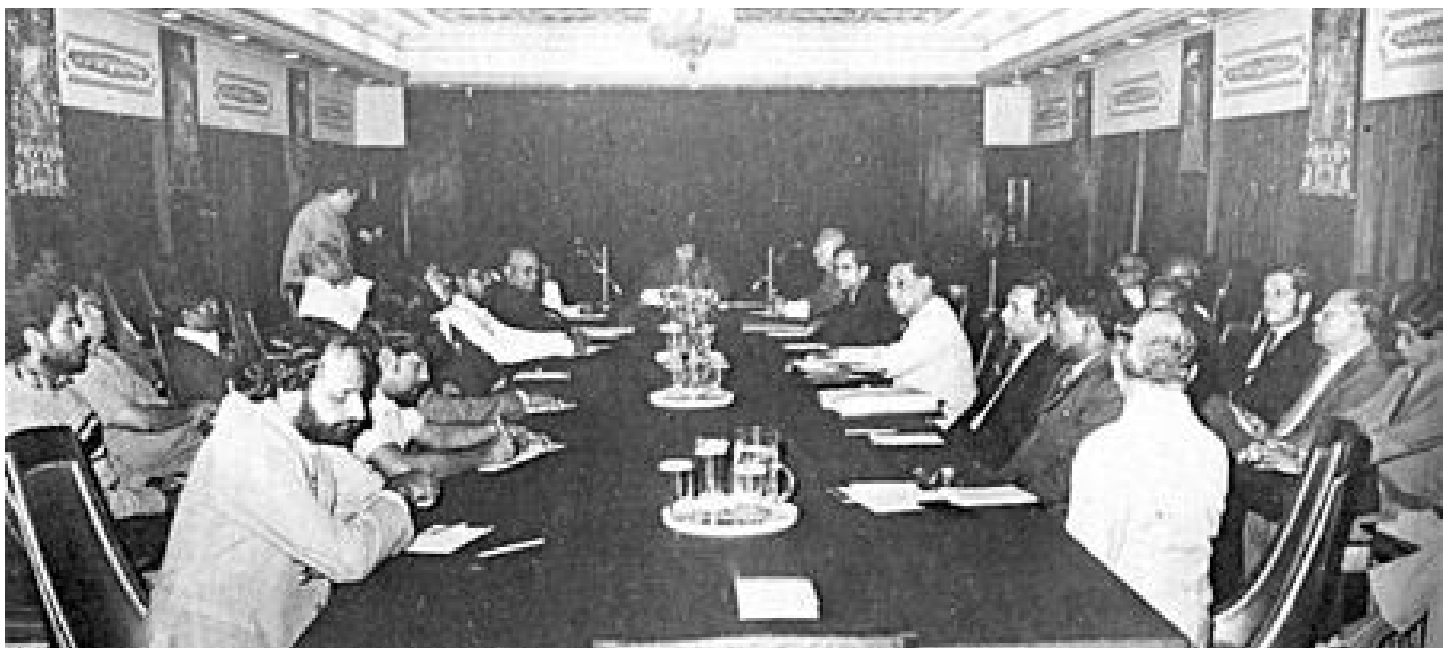
he lacked the right advisors; those around him were merely yes-men. Additionally, he was not in a position to accept advice from anyone else.

### **Prabhakaran's Leadership: Where Flattery Overshadowed Merit**

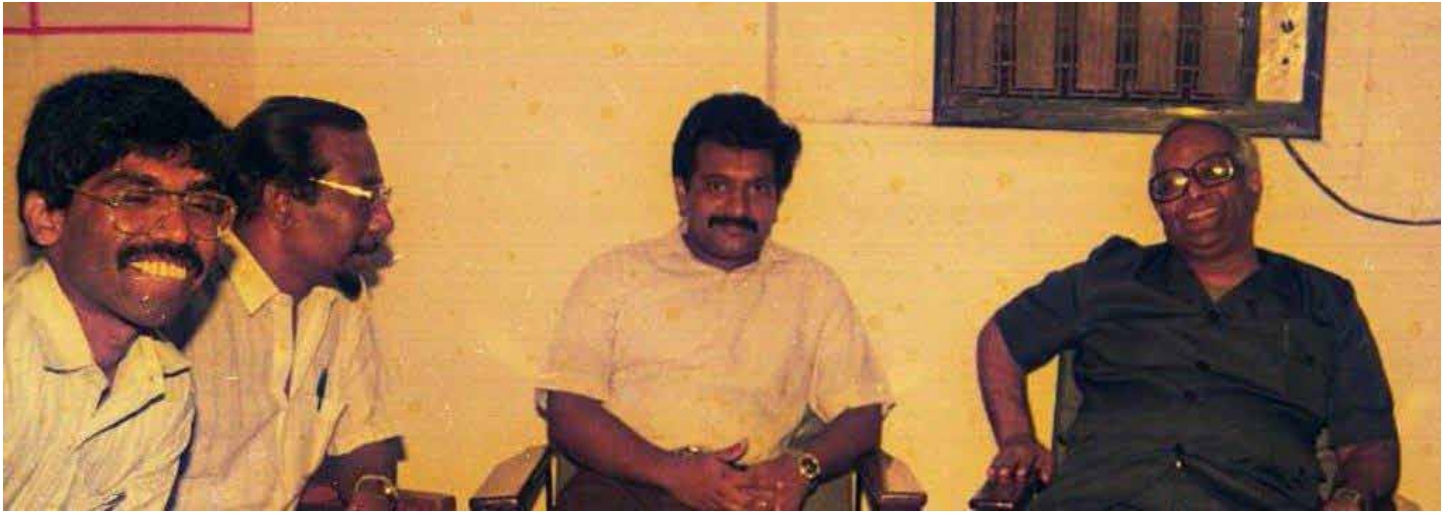
There were situations where flattering Prabhakaran could lead to higher positions in the organization. I agree that, to a certain extent, he was susceptible to praise and loyalty, and merit became secondary for him.

I will tell you about this as an example. Lawrence Thilakar, who worked under me in my Military Office (MO), was a trainee in the third regiment of the LTTE in Salem camp and had joined the movement after coming from France. From what I observed, he lacked nationalist thoughts for ethnic liberation and was filled with extremist terrorist ideologies.

Our military office then published 'Porkkural' (Voice of War), a magazine. However, it would be more appropriate to call it a textbook rather than a magazine. These military textbooks became mandatory reading in all



*Delegations at the First Phase of the Thimphu Peace Talks: Tamil Delegation Seated on the Left and the Sri Lankan Delegation on the Right*



*From Left: Lawrence Thilakar, Anton Balasingham, Prabhakaran, and J.N. Dixit, High Commissioner of India*

LTTE training camps. During my tenure with the LTTE, nine volumes of 'Porkkural' were published. Lawrence Thilakar suggested that we publish an article about the King David Hotel bombing in 1947 by the Jewish terror group 'Irgun' during the Jewish insurgency against British rule in Palestine. However, I refused, explaining to him that this was not an appropriate way to educate the LTTE cadres in training camps.

In the first issue, I wrote an editorial explaining what the LTTE's military office should do, our ideology, and how we plan to achieve our objectives through it. In that editorial, Lawrence Thilakar asked me to write that we run this military office under Prabhakaran's leadership and guidance. I refused to do so. I

said that MO is a work of collective teamwork of many hardworking people. We should promote team spirit, not individuality. It is not an individual action but a group action. Therefore, I said that there was no need to praise Prabhakaran overly. Yes, Prabhakaran's office is within the MO, but it has nothing to do with the day-to-day operations of the MO.

But Lawrence Thilakar must have misrepresented this to Prabhakaran. Two days before the magazine was set to go to print, Prabhakaran suddenly called me and asked me to meet a prominent supporter in Mumbai for political work. Despite having no involvement in political tasks, I flew to Mumbai. I ended up spending two unnecessary days there. When I returned to Chennai, the textbook

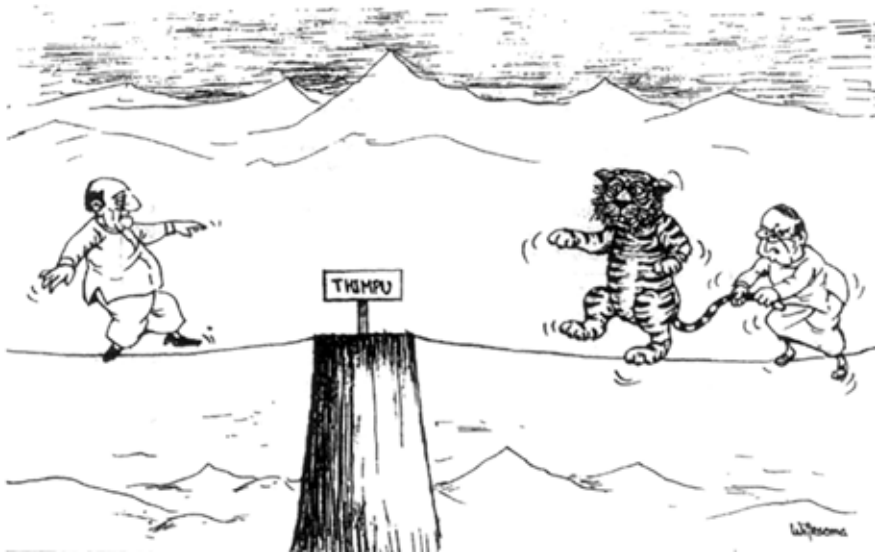


*Lawrence Thilakar*



*Lawrence Thilagar of LTTE, Centered in Front of the Meeting Hall in Bhutan*





had already been printed, and the editorial included words praising Prabhakaran's leadership and ideas in managing the military office, just as Lawrence Thilakar had suggested.

1985, during the Thimpu talks between various militant organizations, including the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, Prabhakaran sent Lawrence Thilakar with me. However, Thilakar was very junior. There were many more senior members in the organization than he. Anton Balasingham was then responsible for the political wing, and many people were in his division. But Prabhakaran sent Lawrence Thilakar, a 'yes-man' to him, for the talks with me. The reason for this was Thilakar's flattery and his closeness to Prabhakaran.

An incident about Thilakar during the Thimbu Talks is to be noted. All the Tamil parties agreed to line up based on the "4 Thimpu Principles". At the negotiation table, Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leaders Amrithalingham, Sivasithamparam, and EPRLF Varadaraja Perumal lambasted the Sri Lankan delegation by lecturing them in history lessons. Thilakar could not be found in his hotel room during the absence of talks. Then I found out he was chasing behind Varadaraja Perumal, begging him for a 'speech script' he wanted to deliver at the



*Cartoon Illustrating the Thimphu Peace Talks*



*LTTE's Peace Delegation with Sri Lankan President Premadasa*

negotiation table. I stopped his nonsense and reminded him that he was representing the LTTE, And I said that by his action, he was disgracing himself and the LTTE. I did not report this incident; otherwise, his career in the LTTE would have ended with zero.

I am a witness to Prabhakaran's great affection for the Muslim community. He always emphasized to me the importance of treating Muslims fairly and ensuring they receive their rights. His favourite places to eat were also Muslim-run shops, particularly one we nicknamed 'Mokka Kadai', located in the heart of the Muslim area. Another favourite was near the Tirunelveli Junction, close to the Jaffna campus. After watching the first or second show of English movies in the evening, we often visited there for Kottu Roti.

However, when I was in Canada in 1990, I was shocked to learn that the LTTE had expelled the Muslims from Jaffna on the orders of Prabhakaran and seized their property. It was then that I came to know that some of the leading members of the LTTE from the East, like Karuna and Karikalan, met Prabhakaran and changed his mind about expelling the Muslims. LTTE leaders from the East may have influenced Prabhakaran.

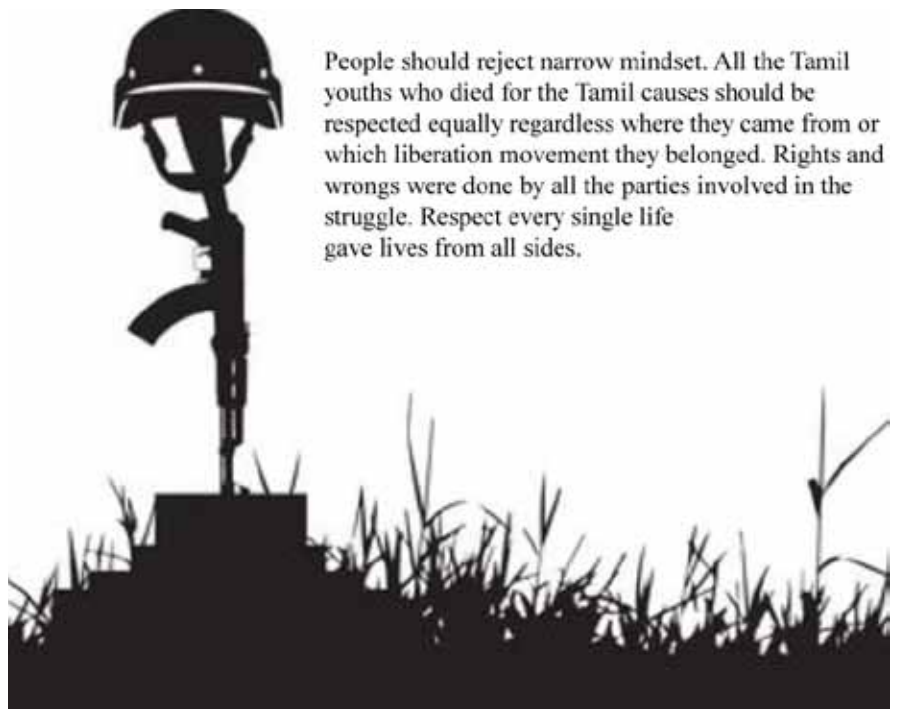
## Equal Respect for All Martyrs of Tamil Liberation

I steadfastly refuse to accept the designation of LTTE martyrs as heroes while those from other liberation movements are labelled as traitors. Every individual who fought and sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the Tamil people in Eelam deserves respect and

remembrance, regardless of their movement or organizational affiliation.

The practice of solely commemorating the LTTE while neglecting others must be discontinued. Now is a crucial time for Tamils to seek reconciliation and foster unity amongst themselves. It is a vital responsibility of the Tamil community.

By exclusively commemorating the LTTE annually and categorizing members of other movements as traitors, we only deepen the divisions within the Tamil community. We must adopt a collective approach to memorialize all those who laid down their lives for the liberation of the Tamil people without any bias based on their affiliations. This stance is non-negotiable for me.



People should reject narrow mindset. All the Tamil youths who died for the Tamil causes should be respected equally regardless where they came from or which liberation movement they belonged. Rights and wrongs were done by all the parties involved in the struggle. Respect every single life gave lives from all sides.



I expressed this sentiment a year ago on my Facebook page when I observed the unequal valuation of different individuals' lives.

*To be continued.....*





# The Heart, Not Temples, the True Abode for Rama Worship:

**Maravanpulavu K. Sachithanathan Reveals**



BY:

**Our Special Correspondent**

On January 22nd, coinciding with the inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya by Indian Prime Minister Modi, a worship event was held at the Varadaraja Perumal Temple in Ponnalai, Jaffna. This event, organized by the Siva Senai organization of Sri Lanka, has garnered



*Maravanpulavu K. Sachithananthan*

attention due to its focus on Lord Rama, a deity not commonly worshipped in Jaffna.

In an effort to understand the significance of this event, we conducted an interview with Maravanpulavu K. Sachithananthan, the leader of the Siva Senai organization, seeking insights into the reasons behind organizing a special worship for Lord Rama in Jaffna.

### **Could you elucidate the reasons behind the special worship ceremony held in Jaffna, particularly in the context of Lord Ram not being a widely revered deity in that region?**

Rama stands as a symbol, embodying a profound cultural heritage and acting as a guiding light for virtuous conduct and ethical living. Rama represents a figure that transcends traditional boundaries of religious worship and geographical confines, embodying a universal appeal.

He epitomizes an inner spiritual ideal, fostering a form of devotion that is deeply personal and intimate. This unique aspect of his veneration is such that it does not necessitate a physical temple; rather, he can

be worshipped within the inner sanctum of an individual's heart.

His persona is a composite of various virtues — from martial prowess and bravery to profound love and unwavering marital fidelity. This multifaceted symbolism demands a rational interpretation, highlighting the role of emblematic figures in the progression of civilization. The significance of Rama lies not just in his historical or mythological existence but in his representation of wisdom and moral guidance.

While historical evidence regarding his actual existence, birthplace, or life events remains sparse, archaeological findings near the Sarayu River in Ayodhya have shed light on the ancient roots of his worship. These discoveries, indicating the presence of a temple dedicated to Rama 500 years ago, formed the basis for the construction of the new temple at this historic site. This blend of archaeology and symbolism underscores Rama's enduring impact as a cultural and civilizational icon.

In an episode dating back five centuries, Babur, the founding emperor of the Mughal dynasty, undertook a consequential visit to the esteemed Ram Temple located in Ayodhya. Babur, renowned for his erudition, was well-versed in the lore surrounding Rama. It was during his sojourn near this temple that he issued a decree for its destruction.

However, this directive was not merely an act of religious or cultural antagonism towards the figure of Rama. Babur's intentions went beyond the mere destruction of the temple's physical structure. He aimed at the core of India's knowledge-based traditions, which were intrinsically interwoven with the narrative of Rama and manifested in various facets of Indian society - including economics, politics, culture, and martial prowess.





*Ponnalai Varadaraja Perumal Temple*

By targeting the symbol of Rama, Babur sought to efface these dimensions of Indian identity, deeming them a hindrance to his broader objective. This deliberate act of demolition was more than an architectural obliteration; it represented an attempt to erase a collective historical and cultural consciousness deeply embedded in the ethos of Rama.

Babur's underlying ambition was to replace these indigenous values and memories with the Islamic tenets of the Mughal empire, thereby reshaping the cultural and historical landscape of India.

Throughout history, the pattern of cultural and religious imposition by invaders has been a recurring theme, with numerous instances across different regions. This phenomenon was not unique to Babur or the Mughal Empire.

During their colonial endeavours in Sri Lanka, the Portuguese demolished revered Hindu temples such as Thiruketheeswaram, Thirukoneswaram, and Thondeeswaram,

replacing the latter with a Christian church.

This pattern of erasing pre-existing religious structures and supplanting them with those of the invaders' faith was evident across the Indian subcontinent. In Gujarat, the iconic Somnath Temple faced a similar fate, around 900 years ago, with defenders subjected to brutalities and the temple itself being subjected to looting and destruction.

However, the resilience of the local populations in these areas is noteworthy. In Ayodhya, for instance, the local community has been tirelessly endeavouring for over 500 years to rebuild the Ram Temple. Such efforts symbolize not just the restoration of a physical structure but the reclamation of a cultural and spiritual identity that had been systematically targeted.

**Could you elaborate on the significance of the recent special worship conducted in Ponnalai?**









The decision to conduct special worship in Ponnalai was deeply symbolic. This event has to be perceived not merely as a religious ceremony but as a pivotal moment marking the resurgence of our region's rich traditions and cultural heritage. The day, which historically symbolized an attempt to erode our cultural and traditional values, has been transformed into a beacon of their revival.

This event represents another turning point in history, where we reclaim our spiritual practices and legacy in areas like politics, valour, economy, and culture. The opening of the Ram Temple stands as a potent symbol of this reclamation.

Our participation in the worship at Ponnalai was an embodiment of this sentiment, rooted in our tradition to honour and celebrate such transformative moments in our history. This ceremony was more than a ritual; it was a collective affirmation of our enduring cultural identity and a testament to our resilience in the face of historical adversities.

**How do you interpret our traditional allegiances in the context of Sri Lanka's rich mythological history, often referred to as the land of Ravana?**

The narrative of Rama and Ravana, central to the epic Ramayana, transcends mere allegorical interpretation, especially in the context of Sri Lanka's cultural identity. The question of whether our traditions align more closely with Rama or Ravana is intricate, considering the complex layers of this ancient narrative.

Contrary to the actions of historical conquerors like the Mughals or the Portuguese, whose invasions were driven by motives of religious imposition and cultural eradication, the conflict between Rama and Ravana in the epic is fundamentally different.

The culmination of this mythological conflict, where Rama defeats Ravana, was not an act grounded in the desire to impose ideologies or destroy traditions. Instead, it stemmed from a deeply personal feud—Rama's response to Ravana's abduction of his wife, Sita.

It's crucial to understand that Rama's actions, as depicted in the Ramayana, were not motivated by a premeditated intention to annihilate Ravana or to dismantle the cultural fabric of Lanka. Rama did not embark on his journey with the objective of conquering Lanka or subjugating its people to his beliefs. His journey to Lanka was a reactive one, driven by the personal grievance of his

wife's kidnapping rather than a calculated plan to overthrow or undermine the existing civilization.

Thus, when considering the legacy of these mythological figures in the context of Sri Lanka's cultural and traditional identity, it's important to distinguish between the symbolic narratives of ancient epics and the historical realities of conquests and cultural dominance. The Ramayana offers a story that is deeply embedded in the cultural psyche, resonating through generations, but its interpretation and the allegiances it inspires are as diverse as the people who cherish it.



has been one of non-interference and respect for the established worship methods of the region. We do not advocate the adoption of Rama worship as the sole path to spiritual

fulfilment or salvation.

It's important to acknowledge that devotion to Rama already exists among thousands of devotees, particularly evident in daily worship at the Ponnalai Varadaraja Perumal Temple. This devotion emerges spontaneously from the hearts of the worshippers, not as a result of any directive from us.



**In the context of the North and East of Sri Lanka, where diverse religious practices prevail, is the worship of Rama viewed as a foreign element? Are there plans to introduce Rama worship in these regions?**

Our approach towards the existing religious practices in the North and East of Sri Lanka

The reconstruction of the Ram Temple at the site where the Babri Masjid once stood is indeed a significant historical event. Our worship and gratitude are in recognition of this event and its historical and cultural implications. It is not an attempt to impose this form of worship on others. We honour the diversity of religious beliefs and practices, and our focus remains on celebrating this momentous occasion rather than advocating for a change in the religious practices of the local populace.



# The ODI that Had It All: India-Sri Lanka 2013 Revisited



The rapidly changing landscape of Cricket has unleashed many thrills. Yet amidst this tectonic shift, the old-fashioned lure of ODI Cricket has been challenged. A 50-over match, offering an even tussle between bat and ball, is a beauty in cricket that remains unmatched. For many of us who followed the game pre-2015 mainly, the nostalgia of cult classics is a feel that's hard to describe. Today, we will revisit one such Sri Lanka-India classic from 2013.



By:

**Dr. Aravinthan  
Arunthavanathan**

In mid-2013, Sri Lanka was facing India in the final of a triangular series in the West Indies. India was the reigning Champions Trophy winner, crowned merely weeks before. They had secured their place over Sri Lanka in the semi-finals. Both teams had won one game each against each other in this tournament. India's main man, MS Dhoni, was back for the final. The pitch at Port of Spain wasn't the usual flat track but one that was destined to test both batters and bowlers.

Sri Lanka batting first found it hard to push the pedal. Tharanga and Mahela, who had made the Indian attack look like a secondary school attack only days before, perished without much noise in



the game that mattered. With two early wickets down, it was time for Sri Lanka's superstar Sangakkara to make his mark. At this juncture, Sangakkara was changing the game in ODIs. He was morphing into a white ball monster too. The signs were obvious. A scrumptious match-winning ton at the Oval against England a few weeks prior was an indicator. But on this day, grit and grind were the requirements. Sangakkara, in partnership with Thirimanne, obliged.

From 49-2, the pair steered Sri Lanka to 171-2. With a well-set launch pad, Sri Lanka was placed to boss the game. With the track crumbling, 240 was surely going to be a match-winning score. Thirimanne's dismissal, followed by a miscalculation from Sangakkara immediately afterwards in a quest to score quick runs, opened the floodgates for India. Wickets tumbled like nine pins, unable to withstand Ravi Jadeja's relentless bowling. Sri Lanka lost the last eight wickets for 30 runs, ending up with a paltry 201. The late-order collapse highlighted the value of Sangakkara's skill. His 71 off 100 wasn't a knock that many would remember, but it was a display of skill, fitness, and most importantly, the ability to rise when it mattered amidst a never-ending glut of games.

202 was supposed to be a cakewalk for the mighty Indian lineup. However, it wasn't to be. Indian innings followed the same pattern as Sri Lanka. Thanks to some excellent deliveries, Dhawan, in top form, and Kohli, Sri Lanka's newfound nemesis, were quickly dismissed. It was the turn of Rohit, who was turning everything he touched into gold, having led Mumbai to their first title win in IPL and establishing himself as an opener to drive India ahead. Partnering him was Dinesh Karthick, who, on his own, was in the middle of a purple



patch. As the duo steadied the ship through old-fashioned accumulation, Sri Lanka's Test star Herath intervened in style, snaring Karthik. Raina and Rohit dashed any hopes of a Sri Lankan comeback, steering India back on track. It was a critical phase for Raina as Kohli had led India in MS Dhoni's absence earlier, leading to even an ugly spat in the field with Jadeja revolving around the snub. However, nothing mattered as India seemed to have cracked the code in the chase.

Again, it was Herath's turn as he clean-bowled Rohit with a delivery that was kept low. Immediately afterwards, Raina played a loose drive, edging the ball to Sangakkara. Suddenly, the Sri Lankan hopes were alive. Yet, India boasted a strong lower order. The game was in the balance.

Any hope of a lower-order resurgence was thwarted by the brilliance of Herath. A Test match specialist was turning the heat on as he trapped Jadeja and Ashwin within a blink of an eye, pushing India to 152 for 7 with only





Dhoni left. India inched slowly towards the target with the stubbornness of Bhuvaneshwar Kumar and Vinay Kumar alongside Dhoni. However, the tail-enders didn't last long, and both were dismissed, with India still 20 runs short of victory.

To make matters worse for India, Dhoni was literally batting on one leg and wasn't finding it easy to run. All things combined, it looked like Ishant Sharma played out an over to set Dhoni up for a final over climax. From needing 20 from 23 balls, the equation was down to 15 off 5, with Eranga in action. The nature of the track meant that Malinga was taken away for runs and wasn't available for the last over.

In true Dhoni style, Dhoni struck 6,4,6 to take India home without breaking sweat. The bowler worked for the man with the Midas touch, taking it deep and pressurising. As for Sri Lanka, it was so close yet so far. The Indo-Lanka rivalry was at its peak, characterised by high-quality cricket during this phase, making a final loss to India particularly painful. Despite the outcome or the context, the title

clash at Port of Spain was a game to cherish. It was a game where old-fashioned ODI batting and consistent bowling-sustaining pressure were rewarded compared to the mainstream slam-back styles. Dhoni's determination triumphed over Sanga's grit, and India prevailed over Sri Lanka in yet another final. This game would rarely be recollected as a classic. Yet, for those who stayed up late to watch on either side of the Palk Strait, it remains a game that signified the beauty of ODI cricket, a quality often missed in the current landscape of the sport.

**DR. ARAVINTHAN ARUNTHAVANATHAN** is a multi-talented professional, renowned in both medicine and cricket writing. A graduate of Colombo Medical Faculty, he contributes significantly to the pharmaceutical industry, focusing on Medical Marketing and Business Development. He is also known in Sri Lanka as a cricket writer, particularly for his Twitter analyses @Cricket\_decoded. Additionally, he is a proficient public speaker with interests in cognitive sciences, medical, and management education. His blend of scientific knowledge, sports insight, and communication skills distinguishes him in both medical and sports domains.





Translated from the original Tamil short story *alaippu* (அழைப்பு) from the 1964 collection of short stories titled *akkā* (அக்கா)

by **A. Muttulingam**  
(அ.முத்துலிங்கம்)

Translated by:  
**Eluttukkiyavan**  
(எழுத்துக்கினியவன்)

# I Invitation

The cold wind assaulted Kandappu's body. He was walking briskly, swinging his arms in wide arcs. The wind was caking his shirtless body with copious amounts of Inuvil's famed fine red dust. A chest that looked like the life force had departed from its cage; a slightly oversized head that seemed to have been hastily glued on to this chest; sunken eyes; a physique that would, on any government servant, instantly merit a



‘medical certificate;’ all together, the sight of Kandappu’s forceful gait on that desolated road did indeed have the potential to inspire a bit of terror.

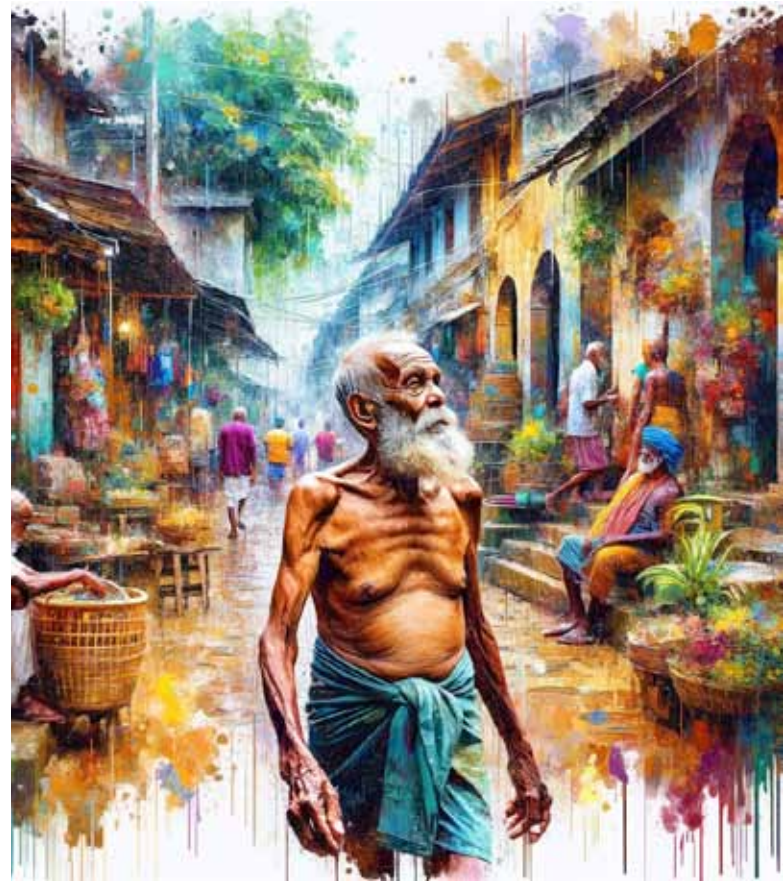
Surprisingly, a bus came into view at a distance. “Perhaps take the bus just for today?” Kandappu was tempted. His hands unconsciously reached for the knot at his hip. The seventeen cents that had been hiding there for three days, reeked of sweat.

- if the boss is going to pay up today ... ..  
at least I can settle the small loans somehow. I’ve got to pay back at Suppaiyā’s shop. He will stake out at home waiting for me ... these last four days have been fasting days ... mmm ... I am leaving my little girl to fend off the lenders ... chee ... what an existence ...

- there is no sugar for morning tea ... ..  
for how long can one manage to drink tea with a piece of jaggery? ... mmm ... I am increasingly feeling weaker with each passing day ... must buy some iron tablets from the dispensary ... how dextrous I was when I was younger ... .. now, as I age, my hand is no longer flexible.

As he approached the Muniyappa temple, Kandappu’s hand instinctively reached for the piece of cloth he was wearing on his shoulder. Without missing a step, he brought his hands together at his chest in worshipping position and called out aloud to the deity, “*appanē muniyappā*”.

- Why, if I have a boy to help me at work today, I could easily roll sixty, seventy ... .. I could bring the little boy along. But my heart wouldn’t listen ... at least he should get a basic education ... the rascal ... yesterday he broke his slate ... he is not going to learn ... maybe I should drag him along to train him at work ... no ... he shouldn’t end up in



this godforsaken profession .... even dying is better than this ... if he learns this miserable trade, he will resign himself to it.

... *chee!* I did get the job as a railway doorman. I listened to my angel of misfortune and let my chance for a government job slip away! I deserve to be beaten with a slipper... As he passed the Raja Mill Lane, Kandappu instinctively scanned the horizon. A cassava seller was passing the junction towards him. He thought “She can’t see me” and crouched down to sit on his haunches. A lantana tree tickled his thigh. He kept playing with the leaves of a touch-me-not shrub.

His body shivered for some reason.

As he passed the house of the *pariyāri*, the traditional *āyurvêda* doctor, he thought of his wife again. “Hospital medicine hasn’t made her better ... I must take her to the *Vēlaṇai pariyāri*...”

He felt a little dizzy. Only when he turned into the gravel and limestone *Māththāṇai*

lane did he start to appreciate the asphalt road that he just left. Thuraiappā and Kandaiya were on bicycles ahead of him. “Had the wife not fallen ill, I wouldn’t have had to sell the bicycle ... When am I going to acquire a bicycle again?”

“Hello, it looks like you haven’t opened the shop yet ...”

“Yes *aṅṅai*... I was a little late in waking up today.” ’s eldest daughter was sweeping

their front yard. — Isn’t my Pūraṇam the same age as this girl? But she is a tad taller ... has somehow succeeded in taking care of his daughter’s matter ... I, too, will have to find a match for Pūraṇam ... But I don’t have anything to lavish on her as dowry... just her luck, she wasn’t born into a home that she deserved to be born into... ... that boy Sanmugam has learned to drive a car ... ... he could be a good match ... ... but who knows how much Vayiravaṅ would demand?







\* \* \*

Although no one spent any money to hang huge signboards at those small Kokuvil cigar factory sheds, those in the know can identify cigar sheds without any difficulty whatsoever. If a strong smell wafts through the tired commiphora trees that line fences along a lane, one can guess that a cigar shed is nearby.

As he pushed the door open, he could hear Murukēsu’s voice. ...mmm... looks like I am late again today ... he hung his piece of cloth on the clothesline, grabbed some tobacco clippings and started loosening them in his palms. They were coarse. He thought of

sprinkling some *kōda*, the concoction made by boiling tobacco stems for several days, and then mixed with arrack, sugar, and spices to cure them but was afraid of the potential for a weight increase.

“What is it, Murukēsu... .. it is “diamond” today, right?”

“No *annan!* Now there is a demand for ‘brilliant’; that is what you, too, will be doing today.”

Kandappu’s stomach churned. He never quite got used to this new size cigar type with fat tails.

“... .. *Thambi* Suppiramaniam ... .. throw me a thread spool, child... ..”

“Here Kandappu ... .. watch out for today’s size ... .. it can easily go wrong .... I have put out four wrapper leaves for you ... yesterday, only when I was packing your cigar bundles that I noticed ... .. your knots had come loose and the rolled cigar had opened up at both ends - just keep your eyes open, ok?”

When he rolled his first cigar and looked for the thread on his right thigh to close the cigar and tie the knot, his hand started shaking again ... .. he found himself mumbling something.

\* \* \*

Even by the time that the twelve o’clock train went past, Kandappu’s hands hadn’t gotten used to the task. The tobacco clippings had turned coarse in the heat. The inner leaf broke as soon as one tried to open it. The wrapper leaf didn’t stay put when he tied it up and the cigar ends immediately opened back up. Perhaps he would manage a hundred and thirty or a hundred and forty.

When the cutter - just a young boy, but quite skilled and was the right hand of the boss - came by and started trimming the rolled cigars, Kandappu started to be nervous. “What is this man, you have blindly stuffed it full of tobacco clipping as if you are filling a coconut sack. It is sagging. Look here everyone ... ..!” Kandappu’s cigar was paraded around for all to inspect. He died of embarrassment and shame.

Mmm... ..what a shameless existence! When the bread vendor came by at lunch time, Kandappu bought half a pound as usual, and bit into it accompanied by the fire from

the two green chillies that he had secretly plucked off from his boss’ backyard. When the twisted bread descended through his parched throat with great difficulty, his weak eyes watered.

Despite his hunger, he couldn’t eat all that bread. That day the Mahābhāratha chapter on Abhimanyu’s torture was being read out aloud during the story session at the cigar shed. When the story reached the place where everyone surrounded the child Abhimanyu in a circular formation and Abhimanyu cried out “Father!”, Kandappu was close to tears. He felt as if the entire world were *Kauravas*, the clan who surrounded the young unarmed Abhimanyu, and he faced them alone and helpless.

A torturous grief enveloped his heart. At the end of the day, Kandappu waited for the boss to settle his accounts.

“Look Kandappu, look at this... .. if you do a messy job like this, who am I going to palm it off on to .. .. after four days, they are going to send it right back to me.”

When the boss put the cigar back into the stock, he whispered, although within Kandappu’s earshot,

“Have all the other cigar sheds in the village burned down? ...if he wants to stick with me ... ..”

The pillar holding up the cigar shed, which he has been accustomed to for thirty years, the bales of tobacco leaves, the iron box, the pile of dried tobacco stalks; everything was a blur in his eyes.

He stood up like a machine to throw the stems of wrapping leaves away. A piece of string dragged along with him, steadfastly stuck to





his *vēṭṭi*, as if it is making fun of his sense of loyalty.

When he opened the gate to step outside, the silent wail of his anguish was deafening: “must I come back in through the same gate tomorrow? Again?”

Two days’ worth of ration book coupons are yet to be cut ... .. Mayilaṅ is going to camp out at home waiting for me ... ..

As he passed the library, the old woman Nākammā was waiting for her usual ‘wee smoke’. He took the country cigar from behind his ear and offered it to her. As he neared his home, his feet refused to move.

He could hear the sounds of Siṅṅāchchi coughing and Pūraṅam tearing off coconut leaves.

He washed his feet by the well and stretched his legs on the veranda. He was scared to ask

Sinnāchchi how she was doing. The deathly silence shook him.

Hunger gnawed at him.

Anger towards Pūraṇam boiled up from within him.

Did she notice that her *appu* had come home? What arrogance ... .. mmm.

In the heat of hunger his anger was engulfing him. He gritted his teeth and waited patiently.

“*Appu* come to eat.”

He eagerly turned his head; but there was no one; it was just a hallucination.

Where on earth did she go? Have I become an object of ridicule?

No sooner had he peeked in the direction of the well than his anger spilled over the limit.

“What is this you moron — why do you spend so much time at the well? ... .. who are you flirting with? ... .. you overgrown idiot ... ..” He picked up the water pot and banged it against her slender waist with all the force he could muster.

“*aiyō appu*” she screamed.

Heavy blows fell on her back.

Sinnāchchi, who was lying down inside, moaned in a feeble voice “*aiyō* why on earth are you killing her?”

“Satans... devils...!”

“Where are you coming from you rascal.” The stunned little boy was lost for words. His fear swallowed half his words.

“*akkā* ... aunt ... house ... *āāā!*”

“Rascal... are you gallivanting around from house to house all evening? ... How long has it been since the evening lights were lit? ... Did you study? ... Is this how you study? ... Dēy, is this how you are going to succeed in your studies? ...”

His back was turning pink.

“*Appu* my *appu*. I swear on my *appu*. Please don't hit me... *aiyō* you are hurting me. I swear on *appu*... .. my *appu* ... I even washed your *vētti* for you... I washed your *vētti*, *appu*...”

He dropped what he was hiding in his hands. The fish curry he brought for his *appu* from his aunt's house was blending with the soil.

\* \* \*

Big sobs and small sobs from the inside alternated. Kandappu sat on the outer veranda wiping his sweat away. Each sob was piercing him like a spear. The pain that bubbled up from within him made him forget the pain of hunger.

The moon was gradually rising in the sky.

“Darling, give your father something to eat,” Sinnāchchi moaned with difficulty.

There was no sound from inside.

“If everyone insists on being stubborn, who is going to console whom? ... here ... why don't you go and eat? ... she, too, is waiting without eating ...”

Kandappu went inside, pulled out a low stool and sat down. Without a word, Pūraṇam





washed a pot and set it down in front of him.

He picked up the hair stuck on the bottom of the pot and threw it away without her noticing.

Had this been a different occasion, how many blows would this have led to...

The rice was just as warm as it should be.

“that fish gravy would have been so good with this...” Kandappu’s heart wept. He ate the rice with the mango sambal that Pūraṇam had freshly ground. It tasted divine. He longed to ask “... is there more rice left in the pot?” but he did not have the guts to meet Pūraṇam’s eyes.

He gargled his mouth, drank a few mouthfuls of water, lit a cigar and went out to get some





air. Inside the mud kitchen with palmyrah stem fencing, in the faint light of the kerosene lamp, she was eating.

Kandappu felt a sudden knot in his belly. It is doubtful if she had lunch. Once again, she was munching on the piece of bread that the little boy got for free from school.

For the second time that day, Kandappu's eyes glistened with tears.

\* \* \*

Pūraṇam threw the sleeping mat on the

veranda and rushed back inside. The silence could kill Kandappu. Before he could ask aloud, she brought water in a copper pot and left it by the veranda.

The little boy had fallen asleep on his stomach, his cheeks stained by dried tears. Pūraṇam lifted him and laid him down on the sleeping mat. She locked the gate and placed the oil lamp in its niche. For some reason, she turned to look at Kandappu with pity in her eyes. That was her way of saying 'appu I am going to bed.'

He attempted several times to find ways to



start a conversation but failed. There were no clothes drying on the clothesline. Still, he wondered if he could call out to her 'daughter, take the saree from the clothesline inside'. Let's wait till dawn — he consoled himself.

Perhaps he had unrolled the sleeping mat the wrong way, he felt his back itch all over. As if it wasn't enough, his body felt hot all over. The occasional gust of wind sprayed copious amounts of dust. The dirt stuck to the body and made it feel sticky.

“How many vows had I made for the little boy! ... poor kid, I pounced on him blindly like a devil...all my fingers on that tender back ... perhaps I should go stroke him gently. Poor boy ... shirtless, lying down with his fly undone ...”

A giant sigh escaped him. He remembered how the little boy had held up his only shirt, caked with dirt, and asked his sister “*akkā* is this the right side?”

When the next account is settled, he should have a shirt tailored for the little boy.

He sat up on the veranda cross legged and peeked inside. Pūraṇam's feet were sticking out of the entrance. I can only rest after I marry her off to a good place ... .. what have I given her ever since she was born? ... .. as she lay sleeping in the faint light of the lamp, he tried to visualize her face.

“If the little boy passes eighth grade, I could send him to work at the co-operative society store... ..”

He heard Pūraṇam turn over in her sleep. How did I hit her on her thin waist, my goodness! ... did I break her waist ... how could I, ignoring the fact that she is a young woman! ... how she toils all day! ... let me get up early in the morning and make a couple

of buckets of hot water. A bath can soothe her body aches.

The wind brought in another gust of dust. Perhaps I should sprinkle a bucket of water ...

With that thought he fell asleep.

\* \* \*

“*Appu!*”

He woke up with a start. That faint voice. Who called out? The little boy? The emotion in the voice made him feel uneasy; He had a vision of Kandappu lying down lifeless, and the little boy wailing. Next — the little boy is walking along the road, with a piece of cloth on his shoulder, and swinging his arms — to roll cigars.

Somewhere, a dog howled.

It seems howling dogs herald the arrival of Yama! He shivered and groped in the darkness; below the shadow of that crooked mango tree branch, a shadow scampered away.

Above, the branch that looked like dark blobs, swayed gently.

It invited him, ‘come come’.

If I ... .. if I die, what will happen to the little boy... .. to Pūraṇam? ...

He couldn't fall asleep the rest of that night; he lay down watching that mango tree branch intently, without batting his eyes.

It appeared to be calling for him with love ‘come come’.

# Voice of the Reader

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At JaffnaMonitor, every voice matters — and every perspective is welcome. Whether it's a word of appreciation, a constructive critique, or a differing viewpoint, we believe in fostering a space where conversations thrive. We invite all to share their thoughts and engage in meaningful discourse regardless of political leanings or affiliations.

Our articles are penned with care, research, and dedication, but we acknowledge the diverse perspectives of our esteemed readership. If your submission equates to our quality, credibility, and relevance standards, we're more than happy to give it a platform.

Have something to say about what you've read? Do you feel a different pulse on an issue? We invite you to be a part of the dialogue. Your insights enrich our content and bridge the gap between the writer's desk and the reader's heart.

Reach out to us at [hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com](mailto:hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com)

Let's craft a narrative that resonates with every corner of our community.

## Your Voice, Our Pages

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Are you a budding writer with a story to tell? Perhaps an observant reader with a fresh perspective on a burning issue? Or a student eager to make your voice heard beyond the classroom walls? Whatever your background, JaffnaMonitor welcomes you.

We understand that the most vibrant ideas often come from unexpected places. That's why we're opening our pages to passionate contributors like you. Whether it's a piece of investigative journalism, a heartwarming personal essay, a thought-provoking opinion piece, or even a poetic reflection — we want to hear from you.

Every article we receive undergoes a careful review to ensure it aligns with our standards of quality and relevance. Remember, it's not about the stance but the substance. Irrespective of political leanings or backgrounds, if your work resonates with our values, there's a place for it in JaffnaMonitor.

Ready to make a mark? Submit your contributions or pitch your ideas to [hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com](mailto:hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com). Dive into the exciting world of journalism and storytelling with us, and let's co-create content that matters.



# CONTACT US

We value your feedback, questions, and insights. Feel free to get in touch with us via the methods below.

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**Editorial Inquiries** : For story pitches, press releases, and other editorial matters, please email [hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com](mailto:hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com)

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