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UNAFRAID AND UNBOWED

Bankruptcy of TNPF's Politics



5,000
Days of Agony

The Dual Legacy of Thileepan



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Voice of the Reader and Your Voice, Our Pages





Welcome to Jaffna Monitor

Greetings, readers!

Today, as we unveil the first issue of the "Jaffna Monitor," there's an unmistakable thrill in the air and a responsibility we are determined to uphold. We embark on this journalistic journey with a clear vision, as evident in our name: we are here to monitor.

The news world is vast and intricate, brimming with perspectives and narratives. But amidst this diversity, one thing remains constant: the truth. Our commitment to you, our dear readers, is to provide news untouched by bias and free from political leanings. In an era where the lines between facts and fiction are often blurred, we pledge to be the torchbearers of integrity and honesty.

This venture is the brainchild of a group of passionate individuals from the '90s – a generation that grew up amidst change and now wants to be the change. We're not just journalists but doctors, scientists, engineers, and professionals from diverse fields. Every team member brings expertise and perspective, ensuring our content is comprehensive and multifaceted. But why the decision to embark on this journalistic journey? We realize words' immense power and their role in shaping minds. We want our future generations to grow up reading quality English, to think critically, and to question the world around them. We aim to be the catalyst for this very change.

Our mission goes beyond just reporting news. We delve deep, providing detailed, in-depth articles that don't just skim the surface but dive into the core of matters. We are here to question, challenge, and redefine the so-called standard norms of journalism. In our pursuit, we offer a different perspective that often questions the status quo and challenges entrenched beliefs. For too long, the dynamics of power have dictated and influenced narratives. The Jaffna Monitor aims to break this mold. We stand unbowed, unafraid, and unyielding in our relentless quest for the truth.

We invite you to join us on this journey. Dive deep into our articles, question our narratives, engage with our team, and, most importantly, hold us accountable. In this dynamic relationship between the reader and the publisher, the essence of trustworthy journalism thrives.

Thank you for placing your trust in the Jaffna Monitor. Here's to a future that is informed, inspired, and impactful.

Warm regards,
The Jaffna Monitor Team



A. Amirthalingam, tragically assassinated by the LTTE, pictured with former Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

The Forgotten Faces of the Tamil Struggle: **A Plea for Remembrance**



BY:

M. Aditha Karikalan

Maaveerar Naal, also known as Great Heroes' Day, is a day of remembrance observed by Sri Lankan Tamils, primarily by supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This day is dedicated to honouring the sacrifices of militants who fought alongside the LTTE to pursue an independent Tamil homeland. While it is important to remember those who fought for the LTTE, it is equally crucial to acknowledge the existence of various other liberation movements representing Sri Lankan Tamils. These groups and their members have often been overshadowed, and their sacrifices have gone unnoticed due to the dominance of the LTTE in the narrative.

The Multifaceted Tamil Struggle

The Tamil struggle for independence is not a monolithic movement led solely by the LTTE. Over the years, several other militant organisations emerged, each with its objectives and methods to achieve an independent Tamil homeland. These groups were born out of a shared aspiration for Tamil self-determination, and many of their members were driven by pure intentions to liberate their people from the oppression they faced.



A. Amirthalingam



Alfred-Duraiappah



C.E. Anandarajan

The LTTE's Dominance and Consequences

Under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE emerged as the predominant force in the Sri Lankan Tamil struggle. Gaining notoriety for its relentless tactics and steadfast dedication to its mission, the LTTE also clamped down on other Tamil militant groups. Rival factions were outlawed, and their leaders and members were often brutally executed by the LTTE, labelled as traitors.

A Day to Remember the Forgotten Heroes

While Maaveerar Naal serves as a day to commemorate the LTTE militants who fought for Tamil independence, there is a pressing need for a separate day dedicated to remembering the youths who were driven by their passion for the Tamil cause but were part of different groups. These individuals also made significant sacrifices and endured immense hardships pursuing Tamil self-determination.

Remembering Intellectuals and Politicians

Several esteemed figures in politics and intellectual circles, including A. Amirthalingam, Alfred Duraiappah, Neelan Tiruchelvam, Rajani Thiranyagama, C. E. Anandarajah, and V. M. Panchalingam, tragically lost their lives to the LTTE due to



Innocent Muslims brutally killed by the LTTE at Kattankudy mosque were laid to rest



Rajini Thiranagama

differences in their vision. Some of these differences were subtle, yet they were significant enough to set them apart from the views of the LTTE's leader, Prabhakaran. Given the profound impact of their untimely demise, there should be a dedicated day to remember and honour their sacrifices, ensuring their legacies are never forgotten.

Remembering Civilian Victims

Looking beyond the militant ranks and political ambitions, it is crucial to shed light on the distressing ordeals endured by numerous Tamil civilians who became entangled in the LTTE's web of violence, particularly during the final phases of the Sri Lankan civil war. It became increasingly evident that the LTTE showed no hesitation in targeting its people. Individuals who attempted to escape LTTE-controlled areas were ruthlessly labelled as traitors and faced execution. Tamil individuals who dared to speak out against LTTE's brutal recruitment strategy often became targets of the very organisation that claimed to champion their cause. These brave individuals were silenced through violent means, leaving behind a haunting legacy of suppression. The horrifying extent of the LTTE's brutality extended even to the sacred family bonds. Some fathers found themselves in the crosshairs of the LTTE and were mercilessly targeted and killed for the simple act of protecting their sons and daughters from forced conscription by the organisation.

In light of these immense tragedies, the lack of an official day to honour those who suffered at the hands of the LTTE stands out starkly. Their tales of sacrifice, enduring pain, and lost lives warrant a distinct place in our shared history. Establishing such a commemorative day would not only immortalise their memories but also emphasise the paramount importance of preserving freedom of expression and valuing a diversity of opinions. ●

MONITOR MEMO

Court's Verdict Puts Emphasis on Political Discipline Over Personal Ambitions



The recent Supreme Court decision confirming the removal of ex-Minister Naseer Ahmad from the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) has led to the forfeiture of his position in the parliament. In his place, Ali Zahir Moulana has taken the oath as a Member of Parliament, representing the SLMC. This verdict is consequential for political entities, emphasizing the importance of upholding discipline and discouraging members from switching allegiances for personal benefits rather than genuine political reasons.

This decision empowers political parties to foster consistency and unity within their ranks. It indicates that members acting against the party's collective decisions risk losing their parliamentary positions. Given the present political dynamics, such a ruling is poised to assist both the ruling and opposition parties preserve stability. ●

The Dual Legacy of Thileepan



Recent incidents involving the vandalism of a memorial float commemorating Thileepan by a Sinhala mob have brought his multifaceted legacy back into the spotlight.



Inked by:
Nedunchezhiyan

Thileepan's determination during his fast unto death is unquestionably commendable, bearing a resemblance to acts like that of the Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức, who died by self-immolation. Yet, it's crucial to consider his commitment in the context of his broader life journey.

While Thileepan has often been referred to as the Gandhian face of the LTTE, eyewitness accounts suggest a history interwoven with acts of armed violence. For instance, it's documented in "Broken Palmyra" that Thileepan had participated

in public executions, notably a lamp post killing in Urumpirai merely months before his notable hunger strike. Such acts starkly contrast the peaceful image associated with Gandhian principles.

Another dark chapter in Thileepan's past is his alleged involvement in the abduction and murder of Premanda, the brother of Douglas Devananda, a former militant turned cabinet minister. Other episodes include the ruthless elimination of a principled Jaffna University student, Vijitharan, followed by threats against protesting student union members, culminating in the fatal shooting of Vimalaewaran, another student activist.

The accusations don't end there. Thileepan's purported role in killing young TELO militants, including child soldiers suffering from severe eye diseases, paints a picture of a man whose actions were sometimes driven by extreme and violent ideologies. The episode at the Vattukkottai-Mavadi camp, where he reportedly showed no mercy even to ailing child soldiers, is a testament to this.

It is clear that LTTE and its leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, leveraged Thileepan's hunger strike for political gain, rallying the Sri Lankan Tamils behind the LTTE's separatist cause. This strategy simultaneously catapulted Thileepan into a position of reverence while obscuring the more violent aspects of his legacy.





However, while reflecting on Thileepan's legacy, today's political manoeuvres around his memory should not be overlooked. The Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), representing a segment of Sri Lankan Tamils, appears to capitalize on the profound sentiment associated with Thileepan. This fringe political party and its national list MP, Selvarajah Kajendran, recently organized a rally that intriguingly passed through multiple Sinhala villages and towns, raising eyebrows about its intentions. Given the already delicate ethnic landscape of Sri Lanka, some intellectuals within the Tamil community argue that such actions by TNPF could risk further ethnic unrest. But beyond these political actions, their assertion as the singular authority on commemorating Thileepan is viewed by many as deplorable. While most Sri Lankan Tamils hold a deep personal sentiment towards Thileepan, TNPF's apparent aim to monopolize this collective grief, purportedly to amass funds from the Tamil diaspora, has cast a shadow on their motives.

It's essential to strike a balance in our understanding. Celebrating Thileepan solely as a peace-loving individual disregards the numerous accounts of his involvement in armed aggression. Conversely, reducing him merely to a violent militant doesn't do justice to the genuine conviction he displayed during his hunger strike. Understanding Thileepan requires acknowledging his multifaceted nature. However, it is equally vital to remember the broader context and his violent undertakings.

In reality, Thileepan's life juxtaposes deep conviction and aggressive militarism. His dual legacy reflects the broader complexities surrounding the LTTE and the Sri Lankan conflict, reminding us of the importance of nuanced historical analysis. However, as we reflect upon this, the current political plays, mainly by entities like the TNPF, urge us to remain vigilant and discerning. ●



India and Sri Lanka Resume Ferry Services After 40-Year Hiatus:

A Milestone in Bilateral Relations



BY:
Our Staff Reporter



Four decades after civil war disruptions severed the vital maritime link between India and Sri Lanka, ferry services have triumphantly resumed as of October 14th. This significant event has been celebrated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who see it as a pivotal step towards strengthening bilateral ties, enhancing connectivity, promoting trade, and revitalizing cultural links between the two nations.

The renewed ferry service connecting Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, aims to rekindle the age-old maritime connections that have historically existed between these neighbouring countries.

The newly launched high-speed ferry, named 'Cheriyapani,' is operated by the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and boasts a capacity of 150 passengers. Covering a distance of approximately 60 nautical miles (110 kilometres) between Nagapattinam and

Sea service: Ferry between Tamil Nadu and Northern Sri Lanka holds much potential



Editorial from
“The Hindu”
Newspaper -
October 19, 2023

Kankesanthurai, the journey takes about 3.5 hours, depending on sea conditions.

During its inaugural voyage, the ‘Cheriyapani’ ferry carried 50 passengers from India to Sri Lanka and returned with 38 passengers in the evening. These passengers expressed joy at the opportunity to sail to Sri Lanka and experience this historic moment.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the significance of the ferry service, stating that it not only brings the two cities closer but also fosters closer ties between the people and hearts of India and Sri Lanka. He described this as the beginning a new chapter in diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries.

Modi underlined the shared history of culture, commerce, and civilization between India and Sri Lanka, pointing out that Nagapattinam and nearby towns have been renowned for sea trade with various countries, including Sri Lanka. He also noted the historical importance of the port of Poompuhar, which is mentioned as a hub in ancient Tamil literature.

Additionally, Modi mentioned the literary works of the Sangam age, such as ‘Pattinappalai’ and ‘Manimekalai’, which describe the movement of boats and ships between the two countries. He invoked the great poet Subramania Bharti’s song ‘Sindhu Nadhiyin Misai,’ which mentions a bridge connecting India and Sri Lanka and highlights how the ferry service rekindles these historical and cultural connections.

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe expressed his enthusiasm, stating that the ferry service is crucial in enhancing connectivity between the two nations. He reflected on the historical significance of people traversing the Palk Strait for thousands of years, contributing to developing their cultures and trade. Wickremesinghe credited the return of peace as the catalyst for re-establishing this sea connectivity. He thanked Prime Minister Modi and the Indian Shipping Corporation for making it a reality.

The commencement of a passenger ferry service between Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka’s Northern Province and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu last week marks the fulfilment of a long standing demand across the Palk Strait for the revival of a sea link. Sri Lanka’s civil war, which lasted nearly 25 years, had disrupted the movement of people and goods on traditional maritime routes — Talaimannar to Rameswaram and Colombo to Thoothukudi. Twelve years ago, a ferry service between Colombo and Thoothukudi did not last long due to a lack of patronage. There was also the popular Boat Mail connecting Chennai and Talaimannar via Rameshwaram and Dhanushkodi through a rail link and a ferry, which nonagenarians recall. The cyclone in December 1964, which devastated Dhanushkodi, and the civil war ended the multiple transport links, forcing peoples in both countries to rely only on air services, which cover Madurai and Trichy too these days. Ten months ago, the ChennaiJaffna air service resumed, and according to an estimate, 10,000 tourists from India visited Sri Lanka over six months. The inauguration of a private cruise service in Chennai four months ago facilitated visits by 6,000 passengers to the island nation. As pointed out during the launch of the NagapattinamKankesanthurai service, the development would not only strengthen cultural, economic, and civilisational ties but also improve cooperation in disaster management and maritime security. It may, at some stage, also enable the seamless voluntary repatriation of thousands of refugees from Sri Lanka living in Tamil Nadu. Normal operations of the service — it ran for a few days this month — are to resume in January in view of the northeast monsoon. By then, it is hoped that the authorities, especially in India, would take steps in the interest of the sustainability of the ferry service. With a fare of around ₹7,670 a person for a journey, the difference between this rate and airfares is not competitive enough for anyone to opt for the ferry. Increasing the baggage allowance of 50 kg would help. The provision of amenities at Nagapattinam port, such as a dormitory and improving rail connectivity at Nagapattinam, require attention, as passengers from Sri Lanka are sure to want to visit Chennai. On the part of Sri Lanka, economists, policymakers, and activists should consider promoting economic ties, including exports from the Northern Province, given the inherent asymmetrical bilateral relationship. Ultimately, sustained policy attention is critical to making this service a success. After all, Nagapattinam is predominantly agrarian and one of the economically backward spots of Tamil Nadu. So, it is up to the governments of the two countries to ensure that the Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry service does not meet the fate of the ThoothukudiColombo service.

This editorial is sourced from the much-respected “The Hindu” newspaper from India.

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar hailed this milestone as a “big step for people-to-people contacts between India and Sri Lanka.”

This initiative seeks to revive historical maritime connections from the early 1900s when the Indo-Ceylon Express, a train service between Chennai and Colombo via Thoothukudi, ceased operations in 1982 due to the civil war in Sri Lanka.

The resumption of ferry services marks a significant step towards rekindling historical ties and forging stronger relations between India and Sri Lanka in the modern era. As the ferry ‘Cheriyapani plies the waters of the Palk Strait, it carries with it the hope of a brighter future and the rekindling of cultural and economic exchanges between these two South Asian neighbours. ●

Sangam literature, which dates back over two thousand years, references maritime trade and voyages between India and Sri Lanka. Works such as the ‘Pattinappalai’ and ‘Manimekalai’ describe these regions’ active trade and cultural ties. “Pattinappalai” represents the beauty and prosperity of ancient Tamil port cities, including Poompuhar. In this Sangam work, Poompuhar is celebrated for its maritime trade, bustling port activities, and its role as a significant trading centre during the Sangam period.

The historical link between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai dates back approximately 3000 years to ancient times when both regions flourished as bustling maritime trade hubs. Historical records show these coastal towns were pivotal in facilitating trade between India and Sri Lanka. They were vital conduits for exchanging goods such as spices, textiles, gemstones, and other valuable commodities.

Monsoon Suspends Ferry Until January

The ferry service aimed to boost religious tourism between the two countries, given the proximity of numerous pilgrimage sites. Notably, spiritual centers such as Velankannai, Nagore, and Thirunallar are situated near Nagapattinam. Additionally, destinations like Thanjavur, Madurai, and Trichy are within a reasonable distance. Similarly, historic temples like the Naguleswaram and Maviddapuram Kandaswamy are located near Kankesanthurai.

Ferry Boosts Religious Tourism

The ferry service aimed to boost religious tourism between the two countries, given the proximity of numerous pilgrimage sites. Notably, spiritual centers such as Velankannai, Nagore, and Thirunallar are situated near Nagapattinam. Additionally, destinations like Thanjavur, Madurai, and Trichy are within a reasonable distance. Similarly, historic temples like the Naguleswaram and Maviddapuram Kandaswamy are located near Kankesanthurai.

Archaeological excavations in and around Nagapattinam have uncovered relics, pottery, and artefacts that indicate direct evidence specific to the Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry route’s history of maritime trade and interactions. These discoveries corroborate the historical significance of the region’s maritime connections.





The Unseen Catalyst: Douglas Devananda's Pivotal Role in the India-Sri Lanka Ferry Service

In the wake of the historic resumption of ferry services between India and Sri Lanka, numerous claims have surfaced, with various individuals and organizations from Jaffna seeking credit for making this cross-border maritime connection a reality. However, insiders and those familiar with the behind-the-scenes negotiations reveal that one of the driving forces behind this significant initiative is the Sri Lankan Minister of Fisheries, Douglas Devananda.

Amidst the competing narratives and counterclaims surrounding the commencement of the ferry service, insiders with knowledge of the situation suggest that Douglas Devananda's dedication quietly but effectively influenced this significant initiative. Sources indicate Devananda's involvement extended far beyond mere

claims or casual support. He embarked on a relentless lobbying campaign that spanned the Indian and Sri Lankan governments. To further his cause, Minister Devananda made unique visits to Delhi on a few occasions, engaging directly with the high command of the Indian government. These face-to-face interactions provided a platform for Devananda to elucidate the importance of reinstating the ferry service between the two nations. Sources further say Devananda's efforts extended well beyond Indian shores. He engaged in intensive discussions with the Sri Lankan government, advocating for cooperation and support for this critical initiative. His diplomatic endeavours aimed to ensure that all stakeholders recognized the potential benefits of the ferry service for both nations. ●

Bankruptcy of TNPF's Politics: Wealth, Propaganda, and Alleged Manipulations



Written by:
Kaniyan Pungundran

Many of us have unique collecting habits. I know someone who amasses stamps, while another is passionate about collecting coins from various nations. My uncle takes pride in his collection of liquor bottles, ranging from DCSL Extra Special to the prestigious Johnnie Walker Blue. The extent of our collections often reflects our financial capabilities, doesn't it? However, in Colombo, an individual's collection went beyond the ordinary. He was not just passionate about cars, but specifically high-end Mercedes-Benz vehicles. His residence on Queens Road in Colombo was emblematic of this passion, featuring an expansive portico explicitly designed to protect and display his Mercedes-Benz collection. This selective collector was Mr. Gaasinather Gangaser Ponnambalam, commonly called Kumar Ponnambalam.

During a car exhibition at Colombo's BMICH, the city's elite showcased their prized vehicles. Amidst the display, a man kept returning, parking another luxurious car each time. This raised suspicions among the police. Could one person possess so many luxury cars? They speculated he might be a car thief.

However, upon questioning him, they discovered he was none other than Kumar Ponnambalam.

The Ponnambalam family is renowned as one of Sri Lanka's wealthiest, if not in Asia. Kumar's son, Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, president and an MP from the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), is widely considered one of the Country's most affluent politicians. He inherited a substantial fortune from his family. Thanks to Kumar's impressive collection of Benz cars, his son Gajendrakumar earned the nickname "Benz Gajendran." Sources suggest that Gajendrakumar receives around ten crores monthly from rents on various properties he owns in Colombo.

I would not have felt compelled to write this if Gajendrakumar had simply focused on amassing wealth or enjoying his familial fortune. The issue arises when he begins radicalizing innocent Tamil youths for his politics. My concern deepens when he, driven by self-interest, opposes potentially beneficial solutions like the 13th amendment and, in doing so, further radicalizes a new generation. The systematic activities of him and his political



party suggest a disturbing intent: a desire for further conflict. Even in the shadow of the Mullivaikkal tragedy, his thirst for blood appears unquenched. Recent actions by his party lend weight to suspicions that he might be pursuing even more sinister agendas, reminiscent of a bloodthirsty giant from mythological tales.

TNPF's Memorial Rally: A Provocative Strategy

The Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), under the leadership of Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, orchestrated a memorial rally in honor of Thileepan. Thileepan, once the head of the LTTE's political wing, is remembered for his intense hunger strike, where he abstained from food and water until his passing. This commemorative event featured a dedicated vehicle and spanned from Pottuvil, a town in the eastern Ampara District of Sri Lanka, all the way to Nallur, a village in the northern Jaffna region.

The distance from Pottuvil to Nallur is approximately 477 km. This journey traverses several towns and villages with predominantly Sinhala and Muslim populations. Both communities hold deep-seated animosities towards the LTTE. While the Muslim community remained passive during the rally, tensions escalated in Kappalthurai, Trincomalee, where a Sinhala mob confronted and attacked the commemorative vehicle with stones and batons.

While Thileepan's unyielding determination during his fast unto death might have elevated him to a heroic status among Tamils, it's challenging to see him being revered in the same light by Sinhala and Muslim communities that have been deeply affected by the LTTE's violent actions. The rally appears to have been meticulously planned to provoke Sinhalese and Muslims. Routing it through areas predominantly inhabited by these two communities seemed like a calculated move, possibly anticipating and capitalizing on the expected confrontational reactions. The very design of this path might reveal its intent. While the Muslim community exhibited restraint in the face of these potential provocations, a section of the Sinhalese community responded.

Subsequently, the propaganda arm of the TNPF sprang into action. Fueled by substantial financial backing from the Tamil diaspora, they launched an extensive indoctrination campaign on social media. Some Tamil-language publications and journalists, dubiously labeled as 'neutral,' also contributed to spreading this narrative. The propagated message rang loud and clear: 'The Sinhalese attacked Thileepan, who sacrificed his life for the Tamils without consuming even a single drop of water. The solution to this injustice? Rally behind TNPF and support them electorally and financially,' they proclaimed.

TNPF's Propaganda and Echoes of LTTE

While most Tamils cautiously approached the TNPF's propaganda, a segment of naive Tamil youths in their teens and 20s were swayed by its harmful indoctrination. Due to this skewed narrative, these young individuals believed that the entire Sinhalese community was responsible for the attack on the memorial float commemorating Thileepan. They overlooked the TNPF's role in stoking the flames of conflict.

The concern arises from the observation that the TNPF seems to adopt the same strategies that the LTTE once employed on the Tamil population. This approach appears systematic in its intent to influence perceptions and ideologies. Instead of fostering critical thinking within the younger generation, there is a clear push to adopt certain narratives without critical examination. This can instigate conflicts with other communities, escalating violence while portraying themselves as victims. It's crucial to note the similarities in tactics between the TNPF and LTTE, particularly in how they engage with the youth.

As a Tamil who has personally witnessed the devastating civil war, I am acutely aware of the severe consequences the LTTE's propaganda machine had on the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The misleading narratives and tactics LTTE employed brought unimaginable suffering to our people.

Weaponizing the 'Traitor' Label

There's also growing concern regarding the tendency of TNPF to label those who disagree with them politically or ethically as 'Traitors.' This tactic mirrors the methods of the LTTE, who accused and killed countless Tamils under the same label. During the last conflict, Tamils attempting to flee LTTE-controlled territories were labeled traitors and subsequently killed. Those challenging the force recruitments of the LTTE also faced similar fates. TNPF continues this troubling tradition of labeling. Almost every leader or individual, regardless of their political stance, who challenges or questions the political machinations of the TNPF is deemed a traitor. Kanagaratnam Sugash, a prominent voice for TNPF, is notably quick to use this label. In the journalistic circle, there was a joke: Sugash once labeled a biryani vendor a 'national betrayer' just because he failed to give him the desired leg piece.

A Dangerous Blend: Narcotics and Politics in Jaffna

Jaffna is increasingly gaining notoriety as a hub for narcotics. A range of substances, from heroin to crystal methamphetamine (commonly known as "ice"), codeine, and even cannabis (often referred to as "ganja"), can be



readily found in the area. Alarming, a small portion of its youth, including school-going children, is succumbing to addiction due to the unchecked flow of drugs within the region. A recent report that particularly disturbed many parents in Jaffna was the arrest of schoolgirls in possession of heroin. The idea of students indulging in such substances just a few years ago would have been unthinkable.

Some experts believe this trend isn't accidental but a deliberate targeting of the younger generation. While many drug distributors have been apprehended, their release often follows shortly after. Why? Prominent legal advocates, directly or indirectly associated with the TNPF, have represented these individuals, facilitating their escape. This questionable allegiance of some advocates who claim to champion Tamil nationalism is drawing criticism. There's widespread talk in Jaffna about a leading TNPF-affiliated lawyer who consistently represents drug offenders. Rumors also suggest that the earnings from representing these criminals enabled him to buy prime real estate in the heart of Colombo. Numerous respected Jaffna figures have publicly pleaded with these lawyers to refrain from representing drug-related cases, but to little avail. Drug peddlers in Jaffna operate with a sense of impunity, confident that they have a solid legal support system ready to back them.

Adding another layer to the complexity of the drug issue in Jaffna is the alleged misuse of these vulnerable drug-addicted youth by certain factions within the TNPF. There are claims that these "Tamil nationalists" exploit the situation by leveraging these impressionable youths for their agendas, mainly to enforce their influence or quell dissent.

Reports suggest that those who oppose or criticize the TNPF might be at odds with these manipulated youths, who are dispatched to 'set things straight.' Such tactics,

if true, have grave implications. In examining the surge in violent incidents, particularly the so-called "sword violence," fingers increasingly point towards this unholy alliance. Such developments underscore a dangerous blend of narcotics and politics, further destabilizing a vulnerable community.

TNPF's Stance on the 13th Amendment: Inconsistencies and Contradictions

The 13th Amendment in Sri Lanka has sparked varied reactions within Tamil political groups since its introduction in 1987. Intended as a remedy to address the grievances of the Tamil minority by providing some degree of autonomy to provinces, its reception has been mixed. Politicians like Douglas Devananda see the amendment as a positive step forward. On the other hand, Sampanthan, the leader of the Tamil National Alliance, had famously remarked that he wouldn't even touch the amendment with a broomstick. As time passed, he began to acknowledge its potential importance. However, TNPF, under Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam's leadership, staunchly opposes it, going so far as to label its supporters as "traitors."

TNPF opposes the 13th Amendment act from its amused "Two Nations in One Country" ideology. Frankly, I don't know if Gajendrakumar himself fully grasps its meaning. The core issue is the seeming contradiction between TNPF's "Two Nations in One Country" ideology and its participation in general elections, which implies recognizing Sri Lanka as a singular entity. If Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam and the TNPF truly support this "Two Nations" concept, their electoral involvement within the Sri Lankan framework appears inconsistent.

An open-minded observer might think the TNPF is just clowning around, wondering if they're even in the big league. But dismissing them as mere political jokers would be a grave oversight. Their deliberate tactics targeting the youth and provocations toward other ethnicities require thorough examination. The substantial financial backing they allegedly secure from the diaspora should not be taken lightly. Given the Tamil community's history marred by three tumultuous decades of conflict, vigilance against emerging threats, notably the TNPF, is paramount. Equally important is the Sri Lankan government's role in meticulously monitoring diaspora fund transfers and investigating any unsubstantiated allegations of illicit ties with the TNPF. Complacency is not an option. ●



Easter Bombings Exposé: The Man, The Myths, The Maulana



Hanzeer Azad Maulana

■
A Composition by
Ukkira Peruvaludhi

On September 5, 2023, the esteemed British broadcasting entity Channel 4 unveiled an investigative documentary titled “Sri Lanka’s Easter Bombings.” This film has cast a profound shadow over Sri Lanka’s political landscape. The documentary postulates the direct complicity of several Sri Lankan political figures in the harrowing Easter bombings in 2019. Central to these allegations is the implication that the Rajapaksa family masterminded the attacks to orchestrate a political shift in power.

The documentary draws its conclusions from the testimonies of three pivotal informants:

Hanzeer Azad Maulana, a former confidant of Sivanesathurai Chanthirakanthan, also

known as Pillaiyaan, the leader of the Tamil Makkal Viduthalaip Puligal (TMVP). Chanthirakanthan currently presides as the State Minister for Rural Road Transport.

Nishantha Silva, an ex-police officer, earned accolades for his rigorous probe into the mysterious death of journalist Lasantha Wickrematunge. His investigation led him to a comprehensive interview with Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Given the sensitive nature of the revelations, a senior Sri Lankan government official chose to provide his insights under the cloak of anonymity, abstaining from any on-screen appearance.

While each informant brought unique insights, Hanzeer Azad Maulana stood out. His damning allegations, especially those levelled against prominent figures like the former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa,

Director of State Intelligence Suresh Sallay, and Minister Pillaiyaan, served as the linchpin for the documentary's narrative. These testimonies accentuated the documentary's efforts to unravel the complex nexus underpinning the tragic bombings.

Channel 4's claims largely stem from the statements of Azad Maulana, a former liaison officer to Chandrakanthan, also known as "Pillayan." The latter, once the Chief Minister of the Eastern Province, currently serves as an MP and State Minister.

Azad Maulana, born initially as Muhammad Mihilar Muhammad Hanseer, is a native of the Maruthamunai village situated in the Kalmunai Ampara district. He carries a significant lineage; his father was deeply entrenched in the Tamil Eelam Liberation struggle. Recognized by the nom de guerre 'Kamalan Thozar,' Maulana's father was a seasoned Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) militant. He also held the esteemed position of a personal bodyguard for the organization's paramount leader, Padmanabha. However, tragedy struck on June 19, 1990, when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) executed a strategic assault in Chennai's Kodambakkam locale. This assault resulted in the unfortunate demise of several key EPRLF figures, including Kamalan Thozar.

Kamalan Thozar was the father of four children: two daughters and two sons. His eldest son, Hanzeer, born in 1983, was a mere seven years old when tragedy struck and he lost his father. Following this loss, the family faced tremendous financial hardships. As time passed and the family sought a sense of normalcy, Hanzeer's mother eventually remarried.

Bearing the weight of personal loss, Azad Maulana harboured deep-seated resentment towards the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), often called the 'Tigers.' One of his close relatives echoed this sentiment: "Given that his father was mercilessly killed by the LTTE, it's only natural for Azad to feel a profound anger towards the 'Tigers.'"

Azad Maulana demonstrated academic prowess early and studied at the Maruthamunai Shams Madhya Maha Vidyalaya, according to one of his former teachers who commended him for his academic excellence. Pursuing bio-science at the Advanced Level (AL), Maulana achieved commendable scores that secured his enrollment at the Sri Lanka School of Agriculture in Kundasale, Kandy. However, there are contrasting accounts regarding his educational journey after that. While some contend that he discontinued his studies after a mere year, others assert that he eventually returned to the institution and completed his academic pursuits. During his university years, Hanseer

assisted Gunasekaram Shankar (a former EPRLF militant), an MP for the EPDP at the time.

In a pivotal 2004 schism, the dominant Tamil militant group LTTE experienced an internal revolt. Its Eastern regional commander, Vinayagamorthy Muraleetharan, more commonly recognized as Col. Karuna, openly challenged the authority of LTTE's paramount leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. This insurrection resulted in a pronounced division within the LTTE's organizational framework.

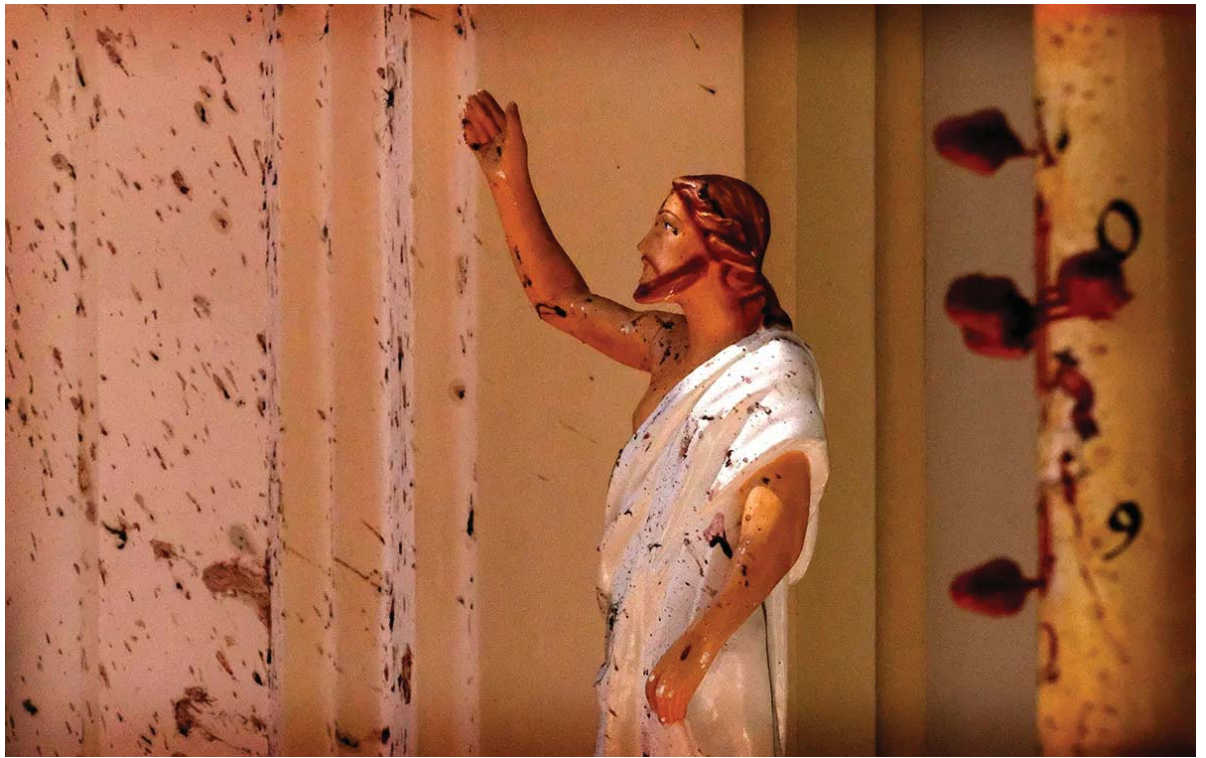
Emerging from this rift, the LTTE Karuna faction, as it was initially termed, shifted its allegiances to collaborate with the Sri Lankan Government. This partnership extended to the nation's military and intelligence sectors. Empowered by state support, the Karuna faction confronted the LTTE, focusing primarily on the Eastern territories of Sri Lanka. In this new power structure, Karuna's deputy, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, known more widely as Pillaiyan, ascended as the commanding figure in Batticaloa.

Parallel to these military developments, a political offshoot took form as the Tamil Eelam Makkal Viduthalaip Puligal (TEMVP). Over time, the party rebranded, adopting Thamil Makkal Viduthalaip Puligal (TMVP). Amidst the backdrop of conflict and shifting allegiances, this political establishment emerged as a central player in the Eastern region's evolving geopolitical landscape.

By 2006, the Eastern Tigers faction required a suitable representative to support their spokesperson, Uruthira Master, also known as 'Thooyavan.' Recognizing Hanseer's background and potential advantages (given his personal loss at the hands of the LTTE and his Muslim identity), Pillaiyan entrusted him with the responsibility. The hope was that Hanseer's heritage would cement his loyalty against the LTTE, and his religious identity might offer him protection from the 'Tigers' hostilities. Within the organization, he was given the name 'Suhanthan,' while externally, he was referred to as 'Azad Maulana'—both names bestowed upon him by Pillaiyan.

The Eastern Tigers methodically and successfully drove the Northern Tigers, also known as the Vanni Tigers, out of the Eastern Province. By July 11, 2007, the Eastern Province was officially declared free from the Vanni Tigers.

Concurrently, the Eastern Tigers initiated the publication of a magazine named 'Tamil Alai.' Azad Maulana contributed numerous articles to this magazine, writing under the pseudonym 'Uttaman.' During this period, Azad Maulana wedded a woman named 'Noskia,' who was born in Colombo and raised in Panadura.



In 2008, the Eastern Tigers pivoted to politics, registering as the Tamil Makkal Viduthalaip Pulikal (Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers) for the Eastern Provincial Council elections on May 10. The 37-seat council saw UPFA win 20 seats, UNP 15, and JVP and another Tamil party one each. Contesting under the UPFA's banner, TMVP's Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, or "Pillaiyan," garnered an impressive 41,936 votes from Batticaloa, subsequently becoming Chief Minister. Acknowledging Azad Maulana's loyalty, Pillaiyan appointed him as a coordinator. Their close alliance lasted until 2021.

second marriage

Azad Maulana, already wedded to Noskia, with whom he has two children, deceitfully entered another matrimonial bond. He falsely claimed to have separated from his first wife and went on to marry a woman named Benaseer from his neighbouring village of Sainthamaruthu. Benazir is an English teacher by profession. On 27/09/2021, Maulana's engagement to Benazir was celebrated with a grand Valima feast at the Rivera Resort Hotel in Batticaloa. After the meeting, on 28/09/2021, Azad Maulana formally registered his marriage at the 'Al-Majjitul Huda Bazar Mosque located in Wangamam Village, Amparai District.

Following his second marriage, Azad Maulana's personal life was plunged into turmoil. His first wife mounted a fierce protest, and the families of both wives confronted him with significant challenges. Both factions sought intervention from Pillaiyan. To shield himself from the ensuing chaos, Azad Maulana appealed to Pillaiyan for protection. However, Pillaiyan maintained a stance of neutrality, suggesting that the matter was beyond his

influence, and advised all parties involved to seek legal counsel. He emphasized that Azad Maulana should submit himself to the course of justice.

Stripped of Pillaiyan's support, Azad Maulana found himself at the mercy of the angered family members of his first wife, who physically assaulted him. The police began to closely monitor his activities, intensifying their scrutiny. Further, on 30/01/2022, his second wife lodged a complaint against him (Complaint No. CIB 153/263) over the deceptive marriage at the Sainthamaruthu Police Station. The ensuing events rendered Azad Maulana's personal life tumultuous and deeply distressing. She further escalated the matter by lodging a complaint with the Ampara CID alleging Azad Maulana had forged government documents. With no viable alternatives, Azad Maulana boarded a plane bound for India.

Upon reaching Paris from India in June 2022, Azad Maulana travelled to Switzerland for political asylum. However, his request was declined, leading to his deportation to France, where his asylum plea was similarly turned down.

In light of these events, Azad Maulana stepped into the spotlight, providing an interview to Channel 4 in which he professed knowledge of the intricate details surrounding the Easter bombings. His narrative garnered considerable attention internationally. However, ironically, those acquainted with Maulana locally exhibited scepticism. Many dismissed his testimony relatively lightly, suggesting it was merely a strategy to secure asylum in a European country. ●



5,000 Days of Agony

For over 5,000 heart-wrenching days, the echoes of veteran cartoonist and journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda's disappearance have relentlessly resonated within the heart of his bereft wife, Sandhya. Each day since that fateful January 24, 2010, has been a testament to her unwavering resolve. With fervour, she has openly and persistently pointed to the Rajapaksa family as the architects of her husband's abduction.

Her relentless search for answers has seen her darkening the doorsteps of police stations, echoing her pleas in courtrooms, and reaching out to the international community at The Hague Tribunal. But 2022 marked a soul-stirring shift in her battle. Driven to despair, she discarded her white saree, the emblem of her mourning. In an act of profound symbolism, she shaved her head, invoking the ancient deities to bear witness to

her pain, seeking their wrath against those who wronged her.

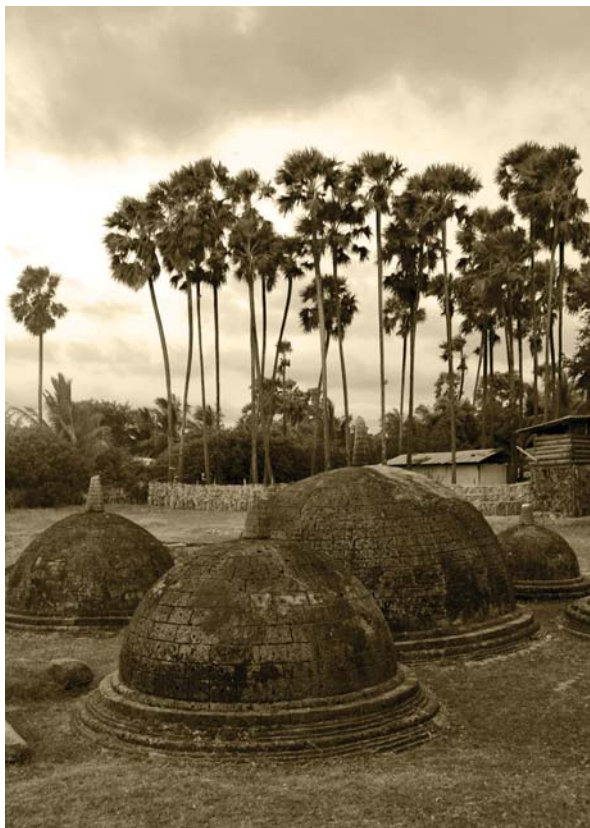
That very day, she proclaimed her battle anew. With the 'Naga Sandeshaya' (The Epistle of the Cobra) in hand, she made her way to the Modara Sri Maha Badra Kali Amman Kovil. This poignant 'Vas Kaviya', seemingly an impassioned message from Goddess Pattini to the mighty Goddess Kali, called for obliterating the Rajapaksas and all complicit in Prageeth's disappearance. Whether by divine design or sheer human momentum, a vast tide of public unrest surged against the Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration in the following months as citizens grappled with mounting crises.

And yet, amidst the tumult of politics and power games, stands Sandhya, a beacon of enduring love, her heart forever yearning for her lost husband. ●

The Deep Roots of Tamil Buddhism in Sri Lanka



BY:
Ahimsa Vipassana Wijekoon



Suneetha Thero

When I first met Matale Suneetha Thero, I couldn't help but be captivated by his mastery of the Tamil language. His way with Tamil wasn't just fluent; it was eloquent, technically precise, and grammatically impeccable. I was genuinely surprised to find a Sinhala-Buddhist monk speaking Tamil so fluently. My astonishment got the better of me, and I asked, "How did you become so proficient in Tamil?" With a wry smile, he replied, "Actually, you should be asking me how I became fluent in Sinhala, not the other way around. I'm Tamil, born to Tamil parents in the heart of Matale.

He continued, "There's a common misconception that all Buddhists are Sinhalese and that Buddhism is exclusive to the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. But that's far from the truth. Centuries ago, before the Chola and Kalinga Magha invasions, Buddhism was the predominant religion among Tamils in Sri Lanka. While my immediate ancestors followed Saivism, I feel a deep connection to the Buddhist path, which resonates with the beliefs and practices of my forefathers."

He continued. "You know, particularly in the northern and eastern regions. Now, predominantly Tamil-majority areas have a rich history with Buddhism. They were home to Tamil-speaking communities that played a pivotal role in spreading and nurturing Buddhism in the country. What's really intriguing is that Buddhism made its mark in these parts of Sri Lanka before it reached the areas that are now predominantly Sinhalese-majority. This means that the influence of Buddhism in these Tamil-majority regions actually predates its expansion into the areas where the Sinhalese community eventually became the majority. It's a testament to the deep-rooted connection between Buddhism and the cultural history of these Tamil-speaking regions.

He continued, “A pivotal moment in the spread of Buddhism in this region revolves around Sangamittā, the daughter of Emperor Ashoka. She undertook a remarkable mission, carrying with her a sacred branch of the Bodhi Tree—an esteemed symbol of Buddhism—from India to Sri Lanka. Her arrival took place at the ancient port of Dambakola Patuna, which we now recognize as Mathagal, situated within the Jaffna region of Sri Lanka. Arrived in Dambakola Patuna, she made her way to Anuradhapura. This remarkable journey traversed predominantly Tamil-speaking areas. As she made her way from Mathagal to Anuradhapura, her presence and the sacred branch of the Bodhi Tree, she carried profoundly impacted the local communities along the route. Many people in these areas embraced Buddhism, inspired by Buddha’s teachings and Sangamittā’s mission. This journey played a significant role in spreading Buddhism and fostering Buddhist communities in these Tamil-speaking regions.

He went on, “Indeed, it’s disheartening to see the prevailing misconception in modern Sri Lanka, which wrongly associates Buddhism solely with the Sinhalese. The real story is far more inclusive. Buddhism had a rich and enduring legacy among the Tamil population. Tamil scholars and Buddhist monks of Tamil descent have played crucial roles in spreading the profound teachings of the Buddha’s Dhamma.”

“As you might know,” he continued, “the Five Great Epics—Silappatikāram, Manimekalai, Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi, Valayapathi, and Kuṇṭhalakēci—are treasured in Tamil culture. Manimekalai and Kuṇṭhalakēci were crafted by Buddhists, while the other three were composed by Tamil Jains. Interestingly, Tamil Saivites did not contribute any epics in this context, underscoring the diverse religious landscape of ancient Tamil society.”

“Furthermore,” he emphasized, “it’s crucial to grasp a fundamental aspect. Buddha explicitly stated that his teachings should transcend any specific race or religion. He vehemently opposed the creation of any religious sect in his name. Instead, he offered the Dhamma—a universal way of life. His teachings and his Dhamma, are intended for all sentient beings, transcending any particular ethnic or cultural group. It’s vital to recognize this universal aspect of Buddhism and wholeheartedly embrace its inclusive nature.”

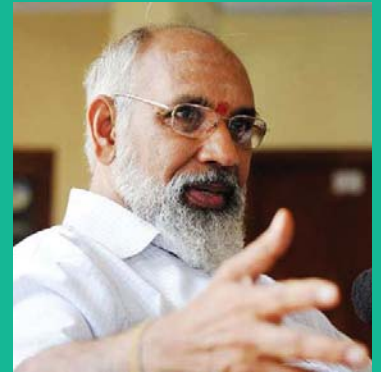
He took a deep breath, momentarily interrupting his extended monologue. ●

To be continued.

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Vigneswaran’s ‘Lio’ Leap: A Blockbuster of Political Blunders

On October 18, a curious event unfolded. The former northern chief minister, C. V. Vigneswaran, alongside some parliament members, penned a letter to actor Vijay. Their request? To delay the release of ‘Lio’ from October 19, given their scheduled protest on October 20. It’s common



knowledge that an actor, even one of Vijay’s immense stature, doesn’t hold the cards regarding release dates. Those decisions are typically in the hands of production houses.

However, in a move that puzzled many, our representatives seemed to sidestep the practical route of appealing to distributors, theatre owners, or Vijay’s enthusiastic fanbase. Maybe they assumed these groups were out of their sphere of influence, or perhaps they were all too aware that their request might fall on deaf ears. Not surprisingly, this decision became fodder for mockery on various social platforms.

Venturing into Vigneswaran’s historical escapades, he has a knack for audacious requests. Earlier in his tenure as the Chief Minister of Northern province, he took to his writing desk to dispatch a letter to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking leniency for the convicts in the Swami Premananda case. Swamy Premananda wasn’t just any spiritual guide. He was embroiled in—and subsequently convicted of—serious offences, including multiple rape cases and a murder. And to thicken the plot, Vigneswaran isn’t merely an observer from afar; he’s a devout disciple of Swamy Premananda.

Given Vigneswaran’s affiliation with Swami Premananda, eyebrows have been raised regarding the wisdom behind his political choices. Nevertheless, C. V. seems set on continuing his distinctive brand of political theatrics.

Guess what? C. V. Vigneswaran and his parliament buddies played the ‘not us’ card on the very next day, claiming they never penned a note to superstar Vijay. But word on the street is they did scribble that letter to Vijay. And they did a classic switcheroo when things got giggly, and the joke was on them! Oh, Jaffna politics!



Gaza Strip: A Focal Point in the Israel-Palestine Struggle



Written by:
Dr. Shakthikumar Saravanan

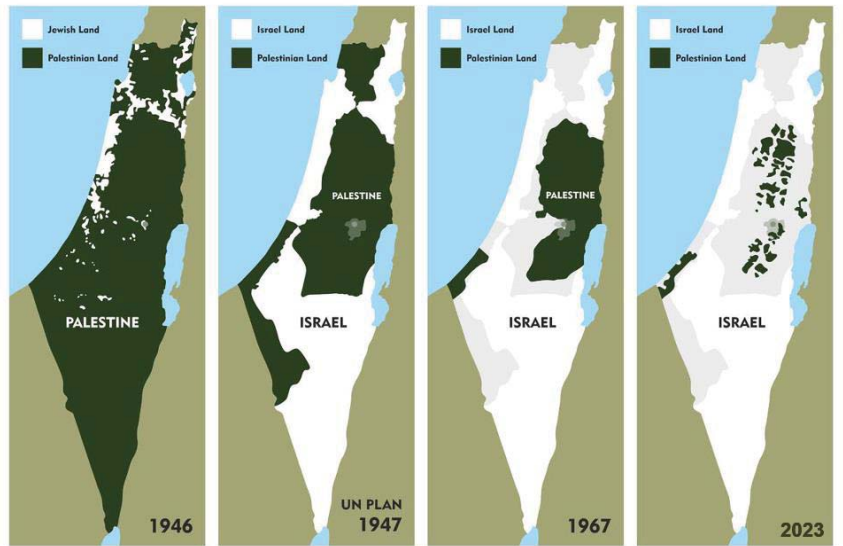
In the 16th century, Palestine, situated at the crossroads of the Middle East, became a part of the vast Ottoman Empire. It was divided into six administrative regions, one of them being the district of Gaza, which stretched from Jaffa in the north (now within Israel) to Rafah in the south, adjacent to Egypt's border. This structure persisted for over four centuries under Ottoman rule.

By the 19th century, Jewish immigrants began arriving in Palestine, primarily seeking sanctuary from European persecution. As World War I approached its conclusion in 1917, the British captured Palestine from the weakening Ottoman Empire. The same year, the British Balfour Declaration supported a "national home for the Jewish people"

in Palestine. Consequently, modern-day Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza came under British mandate after the war. This period witnessed significant Jewish immigration, which, combined with longstanding Arab residency, set the stage for heightened Arab-Jewish tensions, culminating in violent confrontations in the 1930s.



PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1946-2023



After World War II and with a significant Jewish presence established, Britain withdrew from Palestine, referring the matter to the United Nations. The UN put forth a partition plan: separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration. While this was accepted by Jewish leaders, it was rejected by the Arab leadership. 1948, as the British mandate ended, the State of Israel was proclaimed. The declaration of Israel sparked a war, pulling five Arab countries into the fray. When peace was restored, territories had new boundaries: Egypt governed the Gaza Strip, and Jordan oversaw the West Bank. Beyond territorial shifts, the war led to the displacement of around 700,000 Palestinians. Many sought shelter in Gaza, drastically changing its demographic makeup quickly.

The subsequent decades saw shifting control over the territories. In 1967, following another war, Israel took control of both Gaza and the West Bank. The latter half of the 20th century saw the emergence of various Palestinian factions, each with distinct visions, from the secular PLO to Islamist groups like Hamas.



Palestinian resistance to Israeli governance led to two significant uprisings or intifadas. The peace process, marked by events like the 1993 Oslo Accords, aimed to navigate a path toward Palestinian statehood. However, its execution was met with numerous challenges, leading to continued unrest, notably with Hamas playing a significant role in the subsequent upheavals.

In the early 21st century, Israel disengaged from Gaza in 2005, though this was not universally seen as a gesture of peace. Following a 2006 election, Hamas emerged dominant in Gaza, leading to internal Palestinian political divisions. Given Israel's classification of Hamas as a terrorist organization, the subsequent blockade around Gaza has led to profound economic and humanitarian consequences. Referred to as the world's "largest open prison," it grapples with skyrocketing unemployment and infrastructural challenges with the populace caught in political agendas.

Today, with its immense population density, the Gaza Strip remains at the heart of the Israel-Palestine discourse. The audacious ground incursion by Hamas on October 7 marks a deviation from the norm, challenging Israel's longstanding security paradigms and thrusting the Israel-Palestine conflict back into the global limelight. As Israel retaliates, the cyclical nature of this decades-long strife reaffirms the need for a sustainable solution.

The history of the Gaza Strip offers a window into the intricate dynamics of Middle Eastern geopolitics. Recognizing the aspirations and concerns of all parties is essential for a resolution that promotes human rights, security, and peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. ●





Between Resistance and Ruthlessness: **The Harsh Realities of Hamas and LTTE's Tactics**

In geopolitics, two resistance organizations conspicuously stand out for their strategies, significance, and controversy: Hamas, originating in the Palestinian territories, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from Sri Lanka.

Origins and Ideological Foundations:

Emerging during the tempestuous times of the first Intifada in 1987 in the Gaza Strip, Hamas quickly established itself as a significant actor in the Palestinian narrative. Guided by Sheikh Ahmed Yasin and Abdul Aziz al-Rantissi, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood primarily influenced its foundational ideologies. Distinct from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas questions Israel's right to exist, advocating for a Palestinian nation. Conversely, the LTTE envisioned and led by Velupillai Prabhakaran was established in 1976 as a response to escalating tensions and perceived discrimination against Tamils by the Sinhalese-majority Sri Lanka. Aimed at forging an independent Tamil nation, the group's inception was profoundly influenced by ethnic disparities and resentments.



Authored by:
**Imayavaramban
Nedum Cheralathan**

Tactics, Civilian Engagement, and Internal Dynamics:

The LTTE, militarily defeated in 2009, and Hamas have faced scrutiny for their approach to civilian safety. While LTTE's operations in densely populated areas in the past sometimes heightened risks for civilians during counterattacks, Hamas continues to operate in such sites, leading to potential civilian casualties during confrontations with Israelis. These incidents often garner international sympathy and aid in recruitment efforts.

Despite the differing contexts, One common tactic between the two entities is the use of suicide bombings. The LTTE is credited with popularizing suicide bombings, while Hamas has also targeted buses, restaurants, and public areas with such attacks. These bombings aren't just a military strategy but also aim to send a psychological message.

Though arising from different cultural contexts, both groups bear the indelible mark of targeting defenseless civilians from opposing factions. Hamas's actions against



unsuspecting Israelis, paralleled by the LTTE's assaults on innocent Sinhalese, have elicited widespread international censure. Their strategies, intent on instilling fear, frequently unfold with little to no consideration for civilian casualties

For instance, during its 2009 conflict, the LTTE notoriously used Tamil civilians as Human shields. Similarly, Hamas has embedded its operations within the dense populace of Gaza, establishing numerous tunnels in civilian zones. Such tactics indicate that both groups may prioritize their agendas over the safety of the people they represent.



Hamas fighters



Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City

Moral and Ethical Dilemmas: Use of Child Soldiers

Child soldiers have been a grievous point of contention in the tactics of both Hamas and the LTTE. The LTTE has a notorious history of recruiting and deploying child soldiers in its combat ranks. As documented by organizations such as Human Rights Watch and UNICEF, the LTTE often forcibly conscripted children, some as young as 12. Parents in the Tamil regions lived in perpetual fear of their children being abducted and indoctrinated into the LTTE's militant cause. On the other hand, Hamas, while not as systematically involved in child recruitment as the LTTE, has faced accusations of using children in its military endeavors. Reports from groups like the Palestinian Center for Human Rights have highlighted instances where children were involved in militant parades, digging tunnels, and sometimes even participating in hostilities against Israel. The use of child soldiers by both groups not only contravenes international law but also underscores the severe ethical compromises these organizations have made in their respective struggles.

Elimination of Dissent: An Unsavory Commonality

Hamas has been known to execute Palestinians, especially those suspected of collaborating with Israel or challenging their governance model in Gaza. The LTTE's intolerance

to alternative viewpoints led to the elimination of many Tamils who proposed different avenues of conflict resolution. During its prolonged conflict with the Sri Lankan government, the LTTE was implicated in killing many Tamils whom they labeled traitors or collaborators. In several instances, these internal killings surpassed the number of Tamils killed by the Sri Lankan military during specific periods of the conflict.

Both movements have exhibited a dark inclination to eliminate internal dissent, assassinating many within their ranks and branding them as traitors. A striking example within the LTTE was labeling its deputy, Gopalaswamy Mahendraraja (known as Mahattaya), as a traitor, leading to his execution. During the Eastern-Wanni split, the LTTE killed thousands of its fighters from the Eastern division. Similarly, when the LTTE expelled Muslims from northern and southern Sri Lanka, all the Muslim fighters within its ranks were eliminated.

Over the years, reports have indicated that Hamas has killed those perceived as internal threats. For instance, during the 2014 conflict with Israel, Hamas reportedly executed several Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israel without a fair trial. After its violent takeover of Gaza in 2007, Hamas was also accused of persecuting members of rival factions, especially those affiliated with Fatah.

International Sympathy, Perception, and Financing:

Internationally, Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organization by significant entities, including the US, EU, and Canada. Yet, they've managed to secure support from nations like Iran and Turkey. By framing its resistance as a pan-Islamic cause, Hamas has also garnered sympathy from the global Muslim community.

The LTTE faced similar international condemnation, designated as a terrorist entity by 32 countries, including powerhouses like the US, India, and the EU. Their global operations were extensive, relying on international networks for arms procurement, fundraising, and lobbying. The LTTE and Hamas have leveraged their military successes to appeal to international sympathizers for financial support. Diaspora Tamils and the global Muslim community have financially bolstered the LTTE's and Hamas's operations, respectively.

The Dichotomy of Motives and Methods:

Both groups were established in response to genuine societal grievances and a need for representation. However, their chosen methods, often endangering and even harming the civilians they professed to champion, blurred ethical lines and posed moral quandaries.

The intricate narratives of Hamas and LTTE offer a multifaceted view of the challenges resistance movements encounter in the modern era. Their formation, rooted in undeniable grievances juxtaposed against their often questionable methods, provides deep insight into the moral and tactical dilemmas resistance movements face in their quest for justice and identity. ●

MONITOR MEMO

Judge's "Threats" or Canadian Dream?



Cue dramatic music! On the 20th, Northern and Eastern Provinces became the stage for a political thriller. Seven Tamil political parties announced a hartal, raising a fuss over the so-called death threats to Mullaitivu District Judge T. Saravananaraja. But there's a twist! They also threw in some spice by opposing new Buddhist temples and land transfers in the region.

Enter the traders with a grand gesture: the Northern Provincial Traders Association put up their 'Closed' signs. The magistrates? Oh, they played it cool and reported to work. Lawyers, however, decided to take a day off, maybe to binge-watch their favourite shows?

A significant twist to this narrative has emerged with Judge T. Saravananaraja's relocation to Canada. Whispers are everywhere. Was this all an Oscar-worthy performance to snag that coveted Canadian asylum? Some say if he was in danger, he'd stay and rally the masses,

maybe even star in his action-packed sequel!

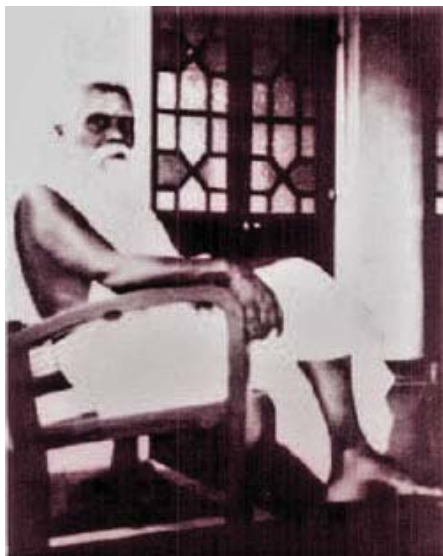
Amidst all this drama, major retail players like Cargills Food City rolled out the red carpet, attracting shoppers in droves. Furthermore, the decision to conduct the hartal on a Friday came under public scrutiny. Usually, Muslim-owned shops are either fully or partially closed on Fridays, owing to the Friday prayers. Critics argue that the organizers intentionally capitalized on this regular closure to exaggerate the hartal's impact. And, in a surprise crossover episode, Muslim-majority areas shifted the spotlight to support Palestine instead of our leading judge.

One thing is evident in this whirlwind of events: while some bought the premiere tickets to the Hartal show, many were left wondering about the authenticity of the judge's plotline and his sudden Canadian escapade! Stay tuned for the next episode!



Sage of Jaffna!

The Tamils of Sri Lanka called him 'the Sage of Jaffna.' His thousands of devotees, including many Singhalese Buddhists and Christians, called him a saint. Some of those closest to him referred to him as the 'Old Lion,' or 'Bodhidharma reborn,' for he could be very fierce and unpredictable, chasing away unwelcome supplicants with a stick. I just called him Swami. He was my introduction to Hinduism in its



pure Vedanta form and my teacher for the nearly four years I served as the Canadian High Commissioner in what was still called Ceylon in the early sixties when I was there.

For the previous ten years I had been apprenticed in the Gurdjieff Work, and it was through a former student of P. D. Ouspensky, James Ramsbotham (now Lord Soulbury), and his brother Peter, that, one hot afternoon, not long after our arrival in Ceylon, I found myself outside a modest thatched hut in Jaffna, on the northern shore of Ceylon, to keep my first appointment with.

I knocked quietly on the door, and a voice from within roared, 'Is that the Canadian High Commissioner?' I opened the door to find him seated cross-legged on the floor, sitting erect with a commanding presence, clad in a white robe, with a generous topping of white hair and a long white beard. 'Well, Swami,' I began, 'that is just what I do, not what I am.' 'Then

come and sit with me,' he laughed uproariously.

I felt bonded with him from that moment. He helped me go deeper towards discovering who I am and to identify less with the role I played. Indeed, like his great Tamil contemporary, Ramana Maharshi of Arunachalam, in South India, Yogaswami used 'Who am I?' as a mantra and an existential question. He often chided me for running around the country, attending one official function after another, and neglecting the practice of sitting in meditation. When I got back to Ceylon from home leave in Canada, after visiting, on the way around the planet, France, Canada, Japan, Indonesia, and Cambodia, he sat me down firmly beside him and told me that I was spending my life energy uselessly, always looking outward for what could only be found within.

'You are always running about, doing something, instead of sitting still and



just being. Why don't you sit at home and confront yourself as you are, asking yourself, not me, "Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?" 'His voice rose in pitch, volume, and intensity with each repetition of the question until he screamed at me with all his force.

Then suddenly, he was silent, very powerfully quiet, filling the room with his unspoken teaching that went far beyond words, banishing my turning thoughts with his simple presence. At that moment, I knew without question that I AM; that is enough; no 'who' needed. I just am. It is a lesson I keep having to relearn and re-experience, for the 'doing' and the 'thinking' takes me over again and again as soon as I forget.

Another time, my wife and I brought our three children to see Yogaswami. Turning to the children, he asked them, 'How old are you?' Our daughter said, 'Nine,' and the boys, 'Eleven' and 'Thirteen.' To each in turn, Yogaswami replied solemnly, 'I am the same age as you.' When the children protested that he couldn't be three different ages at once and must be much older than their grandfather, Yogaswami just laughed and winked at us to see if we understood.

At the time, we took it as his joke with the children, but we slowly came to see that he meant something profound, which we could decipher. Now, I think this was his way of saying indirectly that although the body may be of very different ages on its way from birth to death, something just as accurate as the body, and for which the body is only

a vehicle, always was and always will be. In that sense, we are essentially all 'the same age.'

After I had met Yogaswami many times, I learned to prepare my questions carefully. One day, when I had done so, I approached his hut, took off my shoes, went in, and sat down on a straw mat on the earth floor while he watched me with an attention that never seemed to fail him. 'Swami, I began, 'I think...' 'Already wrong!' he thundered. And my mind again went into the nonconceptual state that he was such a master at invoking, clearing the way for being.

Though the state desired was thoughtless and wordless, he taught through a few favorite aphorisms in pithy expressions to be plumbed later in silence. Three of these aphorisms I shall report here: 'Just be!' or 'Summa iru' when he said it in Tamil. 'There is not even one thing wrong.' 'It is all perfect from the beginning.' He applied these statements to the individual and to the cosmos. Order was a truth deeper than disorder. We don't have to develop or do anything because, essentially, in our being, we are ideally in charge here and now, when we are here and now.

Looking at the world as it is now, thirty years after his death, I wonder if he would utter the same aphorisms with the same conviction today. I expect he would challenge us to go deeper to understand what he meant. Reality cannot be imperfect or wrong; only we can be wrong and evil when we are not real or now! ●



Authored by: **JAMES GEORGE**, former Canadian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, India, and Iran, a brilliant diplomat who was deeply influenced by Yogaswami, wrote this remarkable 1994 first-person account of his experiences with Yogaswami, the Sage of Lanka who lived from 1872 to 1964. The following are his words.

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