

FORTNIGHTLY EDITION  
Rs. 250



# Jaffna monitor

January 15, 2024

UNAFRAID AND UNBOWED



## Anton Master Speaks

Let the People Decide  
My Political Journey:  
Douglas Devananda

The Tragic Tale  
of Suseelan

# ▶▶ Monitor's Map

03

Editorial



04

Let the People Decide  
My Political Journey:  
Douglas Devananda

13

Conscience versus  
Career: Chaminda  
Wijesiri's Bold Exit from  
Sri Lankan Parliament

15

Editor's Note Inside the  
LTTE: Anton Master's  
Revealing Dialogue

16

Anton Master Speaks:  
Former Military Office Chief  
of LTTE Shares His Untold  
Story with 'Jaffna Monitor'

26

Understanding Broiler  
Chicken Consumption:  
Insights from a Training  
Session

28

Mahathaya's Saga:  
Power, Paranoia, and  
Politics in LTTE

34

Defying Party Lines:  
Angajan Ramanathan's  
Bold Move to Support  
President Wickremesinghe

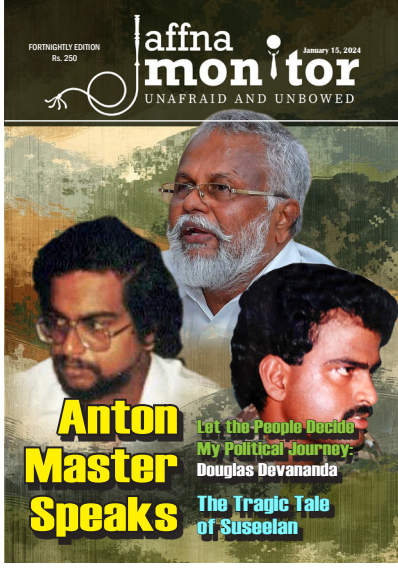
35

The History of the Tigers  
Uniform

38

Captain- story





# Celebrating Thai Pongal and Unveiling Hidden Narratives

Dear Readers,

As the warmth of Thai Pongal fills the air, we at Jaffna Monitor extend our heartiest wishes for a joyous and prosperous festival to all our readers across the globe. Thai Pongal, a cornerstone in the Tamil cultural calendar, symbolizes gratitude, new beginnings, and the timeless bond of community. This special edition brings stories that resonate with the spirit of revelation and introspection inherent to this auspicious time.

Our highlight is the much-anticipated dialog with KT Sivakumar, known as Anton Master. A pivotal early member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Anton Master breaks over three decades of silence in a candid conversation with Jaffna Monitor, sharing insights and reflections that promise to be a revelation to many.

In our ongoing series, 'Mahathaya's Saga: Power, Paranoia, and Politics in LTTE,' we initially planned to conclude the narrative in this issue. However, the depth and complexity of the story have led us to extend the series. We delve deeper into the intricate web of power, paranoia, and politics defining a critical LTTE era.

Enhancing the diversity of our content, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda recently provided a comprehensive interview with our reporter, David Ignatius. In this interview, the Minister delves into various topics, sharing his experiences and viewpoints, thereby presenting our readers with a layered perspective on contemporary and historical events.

We also present the second part of 'The Captain,' a masterpiece by Shobasakthi. Brilliantly translated by the esteemed Tamil-English translator e<sub>l</sub>uttukki<sub>n</sub>iyava<sub>n</sub>, this narrative continues to captivate our readers with its profound storytelling and cultural resonance.

As we embrace the festive spirit of Thai Pongal, we hope this issue of Jaffna Monitor offers you both enlightenment and enjoyment. May this festival of harvest bring abundant joy and prosperity to you and your loved ones.

Warm regards,

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

# Let the People Decide My Political Journey:

Exclusive Interview with  
Minister Douglas Devananda



*Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda along with President Ranil Wickremesinghe, pictured during the President's recent visit to Jaffna.*

Douglas Devananda, the Minister of Fisheries and the only cabinet minister representing the Northern Tamils, recently did an in-depth interview with our reporter, David Ignatius. Here, we present this exclusive conversation.



BY:

**David Ignatius**

**You organized President Ranil's visit to the Northern Province. Was the visit successful?**

The visit was undeniably successful. President Ranil's four-day stay in Jaffna included meetings with diverse groups. He

pledged to allocate funds specifically for improving the region's education, healthcare, development, and employment prospects. This allowed various stakeholders direct access to the President, allowing them to express their concerns and proposals. President expressed his disappointment over the failure to utilize the available political solutions. He also mentioned that the government would not obstruct the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. Overall, he considered this visit to be successful.

### **There are accusations against you for not advocating Tamil nationalistic policies. What is your response?**

There seems to be a deliberate narrative being spun to portray me as anti-Tamil nationalism. However, like cholesterol, which is categorized into 'good' and 'bad' types, Tamil nationalism also has its positive and negative aspects. Good cholesterol can benefit human health, whereas bad cholesterol can lead to death. Similarly, positive Tamil Tesiyam (Tamil nationalism) can undoubtedly benefit Sri Lankan Tamils. On the other hand, negative Tamil Desiyam, exploited by some Sri Lankan Tamil parties, instigates innocent Tamils without offering practical solutions akin to harmful cholesterol. I support and advocate for positive Tamil nationalistic policies, but I am firmly against negative Tamil nationalism. This stance does not mean I oppose Tamil nationalism entirely.

Organizations like the Tamil National Alliance and Tamil National People's Front often instigate innocent people and the younger generation without guiding them towards a concrete resolution. This, in my view, represents 'bad Tamil nationalism.' I



consciously choose not to engage in such practices. Instead, my efforts are directed towards improving infrastructure in the North and East, enhancing the quality of life for the people, and providing employment opportunities to young men and women. In recent years, I've successfully secured jobs for several thousand individuals in the North and East. This initiative has significantly reduced their need to migrate abroad in search of employment. Had I not facilitated these job opportunities, many might have migrated overseas, potentially leading to a further exodus from the North and East, including those marrying the young diaspora. Preserving the existence of the Eelam Tamil community and planning for our future is a more pragmatic approach, rather than pushing our younger generation to migrate.

Recently, residents from the Vasavilan area, partially located within a high-security zone, approached me for assistance in releasing a temple. I assured them of my help and explained that with their support, through their votes and additional parliamentary seats, I could serve them more effectively. When one individual questioned how I could

expect people to vote for me and what I had done against the government, I replied, 'If that's your perspective, you have come to the wrong person. You should be taking your concerns to those who consistently oppose the government. You come to me because, deep down, you know I am capable of bringing about positive change.' He had no response to this. Many Tamil parties use Tamil nationalism merely as an election slogan. However, I hold it as a deep-seated belief.

## **What is your stance on the 13th Amendment?**

The issue of rights for the Tamil people should have been resolved by signing the India-Sri Lanka accord. At that juncture, approximately 651 LTTE members and a total of around 2,000 individuals, including other members from the liberation organizations and the general public, had perished. However, the failure to capitalize on this opportunity led to the indiscriminate loss of many thousands more lives until the conflict's culmination in Mullivaikkal in 2009. The crux of the error lies in the Tamil leadership's inability to utilize the chance they were given. This is the stance we maintain.

My stance on the 13th Amendment is clear: I've never viewed it as the final resolution for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Instead, it should be approached as a starting point. Tamil political parties must develop a strategic plan that acknowledges the 13th Amendment as a foundational element while striving to extend rights beyond its current scope. This approach is essential for progress towards a more comprehensive resolution that better addresses the aspirations and needs of the Tamil community. I have developed such a plan. The critical question remains: do

the parties opposing the 13th Amendment offer any practical, achievable strategies to secure political rights for the Tamil community? All parties, fearing Prabhakaran, opposed the 13th Amendment when it was introduced. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) declared they wouldn't even touch it with a broomstick. Now, the shift in their perception is evident as they have come to accept the 13th Amendment. Yet, like the party of Gajendrakumar, Tamil National People's Front, those who still refuse to accept it and label its supporters as traitors, what solution do they offer for the Tamil people? It's nothing but incendiary politics, misleading the people with bad Tamil nationalism. that misleads the public through rhetoric rather than truth. Such politics merely contribute to confusion and false hope. What we are observing is mere political maneuvering. This version of Tamil nationalism is harmful; it neither presents the truth nor properly leads the people. It's characterized by spreading misinformation. Contrasting this approach of empty promises, it's imperative to ask: What definitive action plan does the Tamil National People's Front have to secure and enhance the political rights of the Sri Lankan Tamil people? Moving beyond mere rhetoric to focus on realistic and actionable strategies is crucial for truly serving the community's best interests.

The party of Gajendrakumar, which advocates for 'one country, two nations,' ironically starts with 'All-Ceylon.' Both MPs from his party, Benz Gajendrakumar and 'Kai Pillai' S. Kajendran, have accepted Sri Lanka as one nation by swearing in as MPs and abiding by its constitutional framework. Why this double standard? They accept Sri Lanka as their country to enjoy parliamentary privileges, and their party lawyers earn substantial fees in courts accepting Sri Lanka as one country. Is this fair?

## **Could you elaborate on the fundamental ideological differences you had with Velupillai Prabhakaran?**

I cannot fathom, even in my wildest dreams, the idea of killing a friend who once shared the same mat with me. Yet, Prabhakaran did precisely that. My fundamental disagreement with Prabhakaran has always been profound, especially regarding his violent tactics. He orchestrated the killings within other militant groups, a kind of fratricide. During my time in Chennai in the late 1980s, Prabhakaran sent his close aide, Shankar, alias Sornalingam, who later became a prominent LTTE member, to persuade me to join their ranks. I told Shankar to convey a message to Prabhakaran: he must first put an end to the sibling killings. I emphasized to Shankar that liberation movements should cease three types of violence: internal killings within the militant organizations, fratricidal killings between different militant groups, and the killing of members of the Tamil community who hold differing opinions.

Prabhakaran attempted to assassinate me at least a dozen times, but each attempt failed miserably. When I returned to Sri Lanka from India in 1990, despite warnings from everyone about the high risk of Prabhakaran succeeding in killing me, I remained confident that he could not. A leader must be able to protect people and his organization. Prabhakaran lacked both of these qualities. I am wholly opposed to Prabhakaran's destructive political methods. I harbor no doubts about Prabhakaran being a Venomous animal. In the final stages of the war, Prabhakaran resorted to using thousands of innocent Tamil civilians as human shields, a strategy aimed at his own protection. Although I cannot delve deeper into the details, it is undeniable that

the circumstances surrounding his end at Mullivaikkal were deeply shameful.

But I distinguish between LTTE fighters and their leadership. I hold no anger against them. This includes the suicide bombers who came to kill me and other LTTE fighters. I even forgave Sathiyaleela, who brought a suicide bomber to my office. I openly stated in court that I had no objections to releasing Sathiyaleela and would discuss her release with the law minister. This was also raised when President Ranil Wickremesinghe visited Jaffna, and I reiterated my stance. I don't have any personal hatred towards LTTE fighters. Many former fighters and LTTE members now work with me. A key figure from the LTTE's 'Voice of Tigers' radio station now works with me. It's not fair to interpret my opposition to Prabhakaran's brutal politics and fratricidal killings as criticism of the LTTE fighters who were tragically brainwashed by the LTTE.

## **You called Selvarajah Kajendran, a member of the National List of the Tamil National People's Front, 'Kaipillai,' and it has become the headlines of the newspapers...?**

During his tenure as the leader of the Jaffna University Student Union, Selvarajah Kajendran faced accusations from the parents of numerous innocent students. They claimed he incited and forcibly sent hundreds of students to join the Tigers. Tragically, many of these students reportedly lost their lives. These grieving parents came to me, sharing their anguish over this situation.

Since joining the Tamil National Alliance with the LTTE's backing, Selvarajah Kajendran has perpetuated provocative politics. Notably, in

a 2002 parliamentary speech, he alarmingly stated, 'Prepare 40,000 coffins; we will return 40,000 Sinhalese soldiers as corpses from Jaffna.' This incendiary remark significantly angered the Sinhalese community and exacerbated Sinhalese-Tamil tensions. In 2008, at the war's peak, He reportedly fled to a European country, sought asylum, and got married there. Post-war, he allegedly returned to Sri Lanka following a purported deal with then-Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Before he departed from the country, he was reportedly approached by Kutti, responsible for vehicles within the LTTE, regarding the car allotted to him by the Parliament. Allegedly, Kajendran informed Kutti that releasing the car required a payment of Rs. 4 million. It is claimed by credible sources that Kutti, using LTTE funds, provided this amount to Kajendran, who then secured the vehicle and kept it safe before leaving for abroad. Subsequently, during the height of the war and after marrying overseas, he is said to have bought land and constructed a house in Manaltharai Lane, Jaffna, where he now resides comfortably.

Kajendran organized a procession from Pothuvil in the Eastern Province to Jaffna to pay tribute to Thileepan. This procession was intercepted and attacked by Sinhalese people at Kappalthurai, Trincomalee. The video of the attack shows him, terrified by the assault, fleeing like a coward without fighting back. While I don't justify the attack, he, who often incites others with brave rhetoric, should have confronted the attack directly.

In 1983, I was attacked by Sinhalese thugs in Welikada Prison. My comrades and I confronted the attack with the moderate weapons we had. Similarly, in 1998, in

Kalutara Prison, I was attacked by Tamil thugs suspected of being Tigers. I fought back using my bare hands as weapons. In both situations, I didn't run away like a coward. While I condemn the attack on Kajendran, I firmly believe that his act of running away like a coward is disgraceful. That's why I refer to him as 'Kaipillai' Kajendran. Kajendran's actions sometimes remind us of the famous comedy actor Vadivelu's legendary character 'Kaipillai.' In this role, Kaipillai pretends to be brave in public, but in reality, he is very much scared. This similarity is why I draw the comparison.

### **You were pretty critical of Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam regarding the murder of his father, Kumar Ponnambalam. Could you elaborate on that?**

Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam's father, Kumar Ponnambalam, was a friend of mine. He led a life of luxury in central Colombo, and his residence's yard was consistently filled with numerous Benz cars. Once, in a lighter vein, I suggested that he could sell one of those Benz cars to aid thousands of Tamil people. He responded, 'I say, that's a separate issue; politics is different.'

In 1998, I survived a narrow brush with death when I was attacked by the Tigers in Kalutara prison. When I returned from the hospital, Kumar Ponnambalam and his son, Gajendrakumar, visited my house. During that visit, Kumar admonished me, questioning, 'Don't you know they (the Tigers) are murderers? Why did you go to see them? We knew something like this would happen. That's precisely why we never visit the Tigers in prison.' Gajendrakumar cannot deny that this incident took place.





*Visibly shattered Douglas Devanada carrying the coffin of his advisor and human rights activist Maheswari Velautham, who was shot dead by LTTE gunmen on 13 May 2008 near Nellyadi in Vadamaraadchi, Jaffna.*

I was deeply saddened upon learning of Kumar Ponnambalam's murder. It was a tragic event, which I have consistently and vehemently condemned from that day to the present. However, Gajendrakumar has never initiated any legal proceedings concerning his father's murder. He has avoided this because a thorough investigation might unveil the identity of the murderer, potentially jeopardizing Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam's political career. I believe the fear that such an investigation could label him as the son of a traitor, in the LTTE supporters's view, is the primary reason Gajendrakumar has refrained from pursuing any legal action regarding his father's murder.

### **The struggle of the relatives of those who disappeared due to the war still continues...**

Among the Tamil politicians in the North, I am the one who fully understands the pain of the families of the disappeared, as I am also one of them. This is because my brother, Premananda, was abducted by the LTTE and subsequently disappeared. (He takes a small pocket diary from his shirt pocket and shows

a news clipping about his younger brother Premananda's disappearance.) In this way, I, too, belong to the category of relatives of the disappeared. My mother, Maheswari, passed away when we were children, and we were raised by our father, Kathiravelu, and his sister, Parameswari. When they learned that my brother Premananda had been abducted and disappeared by the Tigers, they were inconsolable, like a cow that had lost its calf.

Holding onto the hope that Premananda was still alive, my father, foster mother, and other siblings often discussed this with me. They pleaded with me to search for Premananda. However, knowing the nature of the LTTE leadership, I was aware that Premananda had been killed by the Tigers. But, out of respect for their feelings, I never disclosed to them my belief that Premananda could have been killed by the Tigers. My father and foster mother passed away without knowing the truth about what happened to Premananda. Not only my own brother but also many of my close comrades, including Maheswari Velautham, a human rights lawyer; Atputharajah Nadarajah, the founding editor of the magazine *Thinamurasu*; and Balanadarajah Iyer, editor of *Thinamurasu*, were killed by the LTTE.



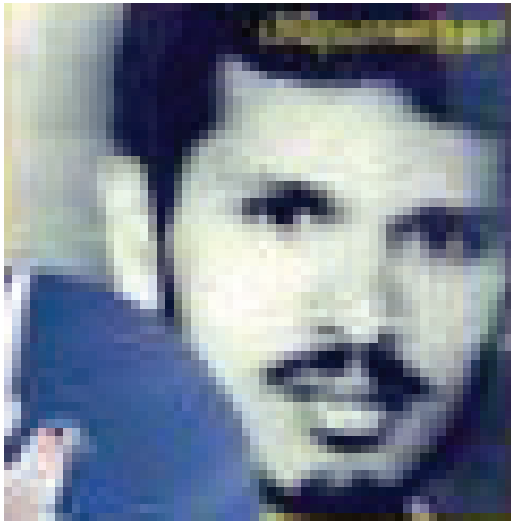
*Maheswari Velautham*



*Atputharajah Nadarajah*



*Balanadarajah Iyer*



*Premananda*

In this way, I can fully empathize with the feelings of the relatives of the disappeared. Many of these relatives have approached me, seeking justice. To them, I say, I am one of you. I am not unaware of the pain and suffering endured by the families of the disappeared. We must seek a resolution for their tears. This issue should not be exploited for political purposes; instead, we must strive to find a just solution.

### **Considering the long-standing issue of Indian fishermen violating the maritime boundary, what comprehensive plan do you propose to effectively put a full stop to this persistent problem?**

The Sri Lankan government is proactively engaged in discussions with New Delhi to address the activities of Indian fishermen who violate the maritime boundary. These fishermen should be apprehended without exception. Moreover, it's imperative that the nine Members of Parliament from the Northern Province visit Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to converse with Chief Ministers M.K.

Stalin and N. Rangasamy. Their meetings should also extend to local Tamil political leaders to accurately convey the situation. Such measures could significantly diminish the problem. Similarly, fishermen associations from the Northern Province need to visit these regions to present the actual circumstances. Countering the misleading narrative that Indian fishermen are merely continuing ancient practices without infringing on maritime borders and that the Sri Lankan navy is disturbing them is crucial.

Nine Members of Parliament from the Northern Province, along with fishermen's associations from the same area, should clearly communicate to our brethren in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry that Indian fishermen, by crossing borders and engaging in bottom trawling within Sri Lanka's maritime territory, are causing significant harm to marine resources. This practice leads to the deterioration of the sea bed. Such activities not only negatively impact the ecosystem but also affect the livelihoods of the local population. Furthermore, these practices cause damage to the marine equipment of northern Tamil fishermen, resulting in substantial livelihood losses for these individuals.



The current scenario is markedly different from the wartime environment. The Sri Lankan Navy faces challenges in apprehending these fishermen due to the overwhelming number of Indian fishing boats and the impracticality of using firearms, as was previously done. Maritime arrests are notably more complex than terrestrial ones. However, due to my firm stance, the Navy has begun making arrests. I have urged Northern Parliamentarians from various parties to collaboratively address this issue, yet the response has been underwhelming. Recently, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs Siddharthan and Selvam Adaikalanathan have agreed to participate in these efforts. If all nine parliamentarians, irrespective of their party affiliations, come together and make a concerted effort by visiting India, it could potentially resolve approximately 70% of the issues our fishermen face. This issue is a matter of public concern, not a personal one. Hence, politicians must set aside party divisions and individual ambitions to work collaboratively on this pressing matter.

**You've mentioned the possibility of retiring from politics, particularly with the upcoming election potentially being your last. Is this indeed your plan, and if so, what factors have led to this decision?**

Recently, there has been speculation about my retirement from politics, and it's true that I've considered it, especially now that I'm 67 years old. My life has been wholly dedicated to the welfare of the Tamil people. I remain active in politics primarily because I feel a profound responsibility, being one of the few who initiated the armed struggle. This

commitment is the driving force behind my political journey. Abandoning my people is not an option for me; doing so would weigh heavily on my conscience and disrupt my peace. When I decided to return to Sri Lanka from India, numerous friends and relatives strongly advised against it. They warned of the significant dangers I would face, even going so far as to say that Prabhakaran would target me. Despite these warnings, I was driven by an overwhelming sense of duty towards our people. The option to settle in India or another foreign country, where many of my relatives live, and lead a comfortable life was available to me. However, such a path held no appeal. I sensed a significant gap in the Tamil leadership, a vacuum that I felt compelled to fill. My return was more than a mere decision; it was a calling, a responsibility I felt deeply obligated to undertake for the advancement and welfare of our people.

To date, My routine is rigorous. I usually retire to bed by 10 or 10:30 at night and rise at 3 am. In my Jaffna office, I don't even have a bed; I often rest right here, adjusting myself amidst the files (pointing to a long desk in front of him). Personal comfort and possessions have never been my priority; I have never built anything for my sole benefit, and I have no family. The party is my family, and ultimately, the support of the Tamil people will bolster my political strength. Such political strength is crucial for my approach to national reconciliation to be fully successful. Without political power, achieving significant goals is impossible, and I aim to accomplish everything that is needed. Therefore, the decision of whether I should continue in politics or not should rightly rest with the people.

# Conscience versus Career:

## Chaminda Wijesiri's Bold Exit from Sri Lankan Parliament



BY:

**Our Special Correspondent**

Sri Lanka's political scene, always buzzing with intense rivalries and sudden changes, has just witnessed a remarkable event. SJB MP Chaminda Wijesiri, in an unexpected move, has stepped down from Parliament. This is quite unusual in a setting where political roles are usually held fiercely, sparking a wave of debates and speculation.

Wijesiri's resignation breaks the typical pattern in Sri Lankan politics. It came as a shock to many, especially since politicians in Sri Lanka are known for their stronghold on power. Right after a budget vote, the timing points to some deep thinking behind his decision.

During an emotional goodbye speech in Parliament, Wijesiri shared his worries about the growing dislike for politicians among the public. This dislike has become so intense that it's affecting even the families of MPs. His stepping down raises essential questions about the values and principles of other MPs who choose to stay on despite public dissatisfaction.

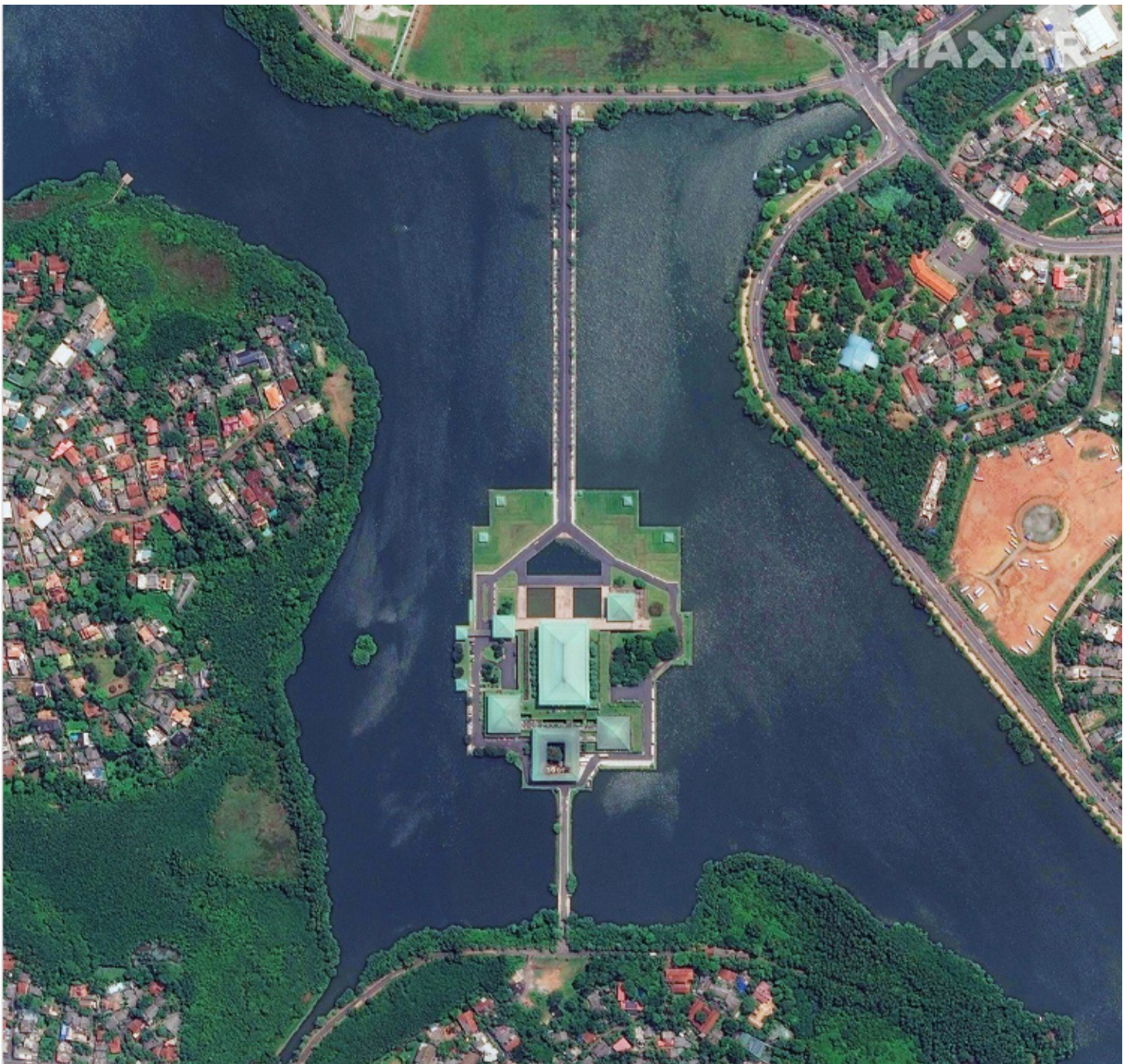
In Sri Lanka, government MPs often face harsher criticism than their counterparts in the



*Chaminda Wijesiri*

opposition, including threats and even violent attacks. Yet, such intense pressure has rarely led to resignations, highlighting different attitudes towards public opinion across political groups.

Wijesiri intends to remain active in politics with the SJB and appears optimistic about his future in elections. However, his resignation brings up a bigger question: will ongoing



*Aerial View of the Sri Lankan Parliament*

public frustration lead to more changes or shifts in other MPs' actions? This is complicated by people's general mistrust towards politicians, who are often seen as self-serving.

This incident has also caused some uncertainty within the SJB, particularly for its leader, Sajith Premadasa. There's a concern that new MPs might change sides, as has happened before. The unpredictable nature of Sri Lankan politics, where surprising alliances are not uncommon, adds to this unpredictability.

Moreover, this situation also prompts us to think about the role of money and influence in Sri Lankan politics. Pursuing political power often clashes with public trust and honesty.

In summary, Wijesiri's resignation is more than just a single event. It mirrors the complex and often stormy nature of politics in Sri Lanka. It highlights the challenges in balancing personal goals, serving the public, and the ever-shifting power dynamics and public perception in Sri Lankan politics.

# Inside the LTTE: Anton Master's Revealing Dialogue



*Anton Master, Prabhakaran, and Thileepan captured together a day before Thileepan's fasting.*

KT Sivakumar, known as Anton Master, is one of the early members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). A close friend of LTTE leader Prabhakaran, he was a member of the Central Committee of the LTTE when it had such a structure before the organization transformed into a movement with sole leadership. He served as LTTE's head of the Military Office (MO), which he formed to convert the LTTE military wing into a formidable fighting force. He represented the LTTE in the two Thimphu peace talks in Bhutan with Thilakar.

In 1988, during the tenure of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force, Anton Master left the LTTE due to a disagreement with Prabhakaran. For over 35 years, Anton Master has remained uninvolved in any activities associated with the Liberation Tigers or political matters. This narrative stems from a long conversation I had with him after considerable effort.

He does not want to talk negatively about the LTTE, an organization with which he spent

his prime years, and certainly does not wish to disparage Prabhakaran, his one-time close friend. He stresses that the LTTE era is a closed chapter in his life, one he prefers not to revisit. Nevertheless, after considerable persuasion, he consented to a conversation with me. It seems his willingness is driven by a hope that future generations might learn from the LTTE leadership's past errors.

He expressed no surprise at the LTTE's military defeat in 2009, attributing their downfall to an earlier juncture – particularly when their leader, Prabhakaran, dismissed the possibility of an interim government solution offered by India in 1988. He remains reluctant to engage in interviews, preferring to call it a dialogue. Here is the dialogue I had with him. We present it in two parts, with the following part appearing in our next issue.

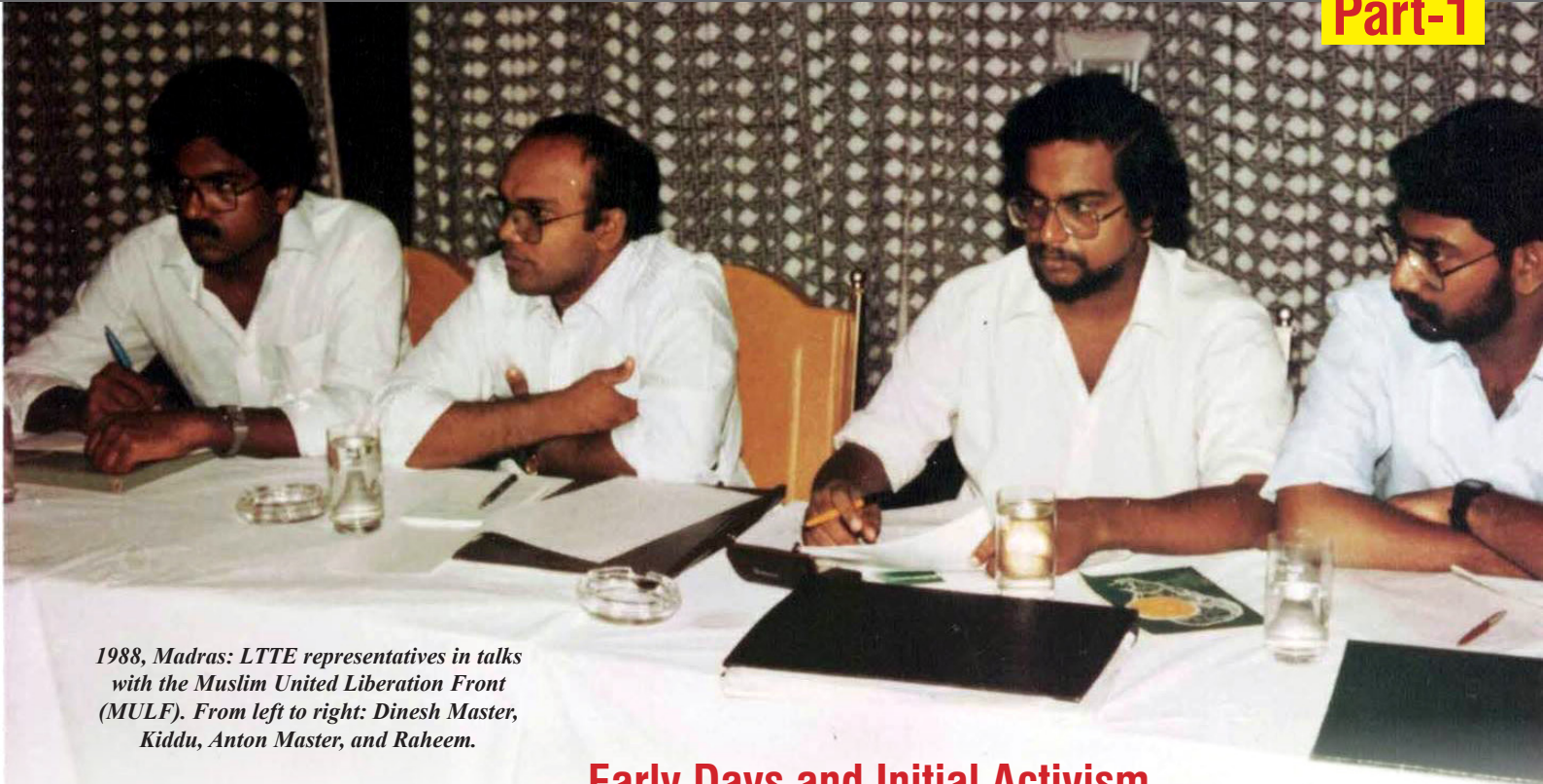
Sincerely,

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

# Anton Master Speaks:

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

Part-1



1988, Madras: LTTE representatives in talks with the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF). From left to right: Dinesh Master, Kiddu, Anton Master, and Raheem.



BY:

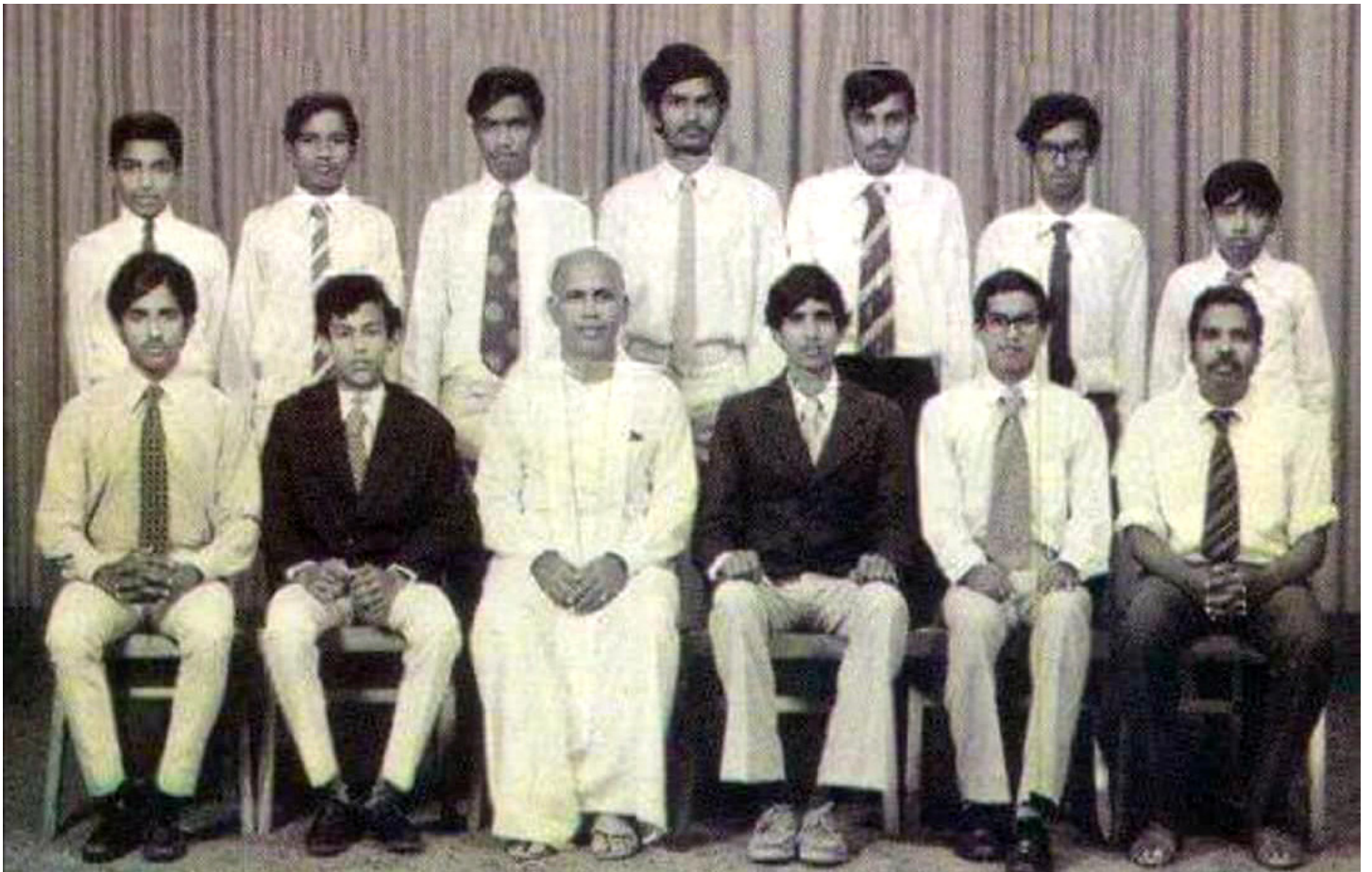
**Kaniyan Pungundran**

கணியன் பூங்குன்றன்

### Early Days and Initial Activism

Ponnamman, a senior member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was a dear friend of mine from our days at Jaffna Hindu College. Our friendship, which initially began with a confrontation at the college, grew stronger over time. In 1973, along with Ponnamman, Chera, Thave, and a few others, we formed a group called the "Try Science Association" with ambitious plans to develop anything that could be useful for liberation efforts. One of our significant





*Anton Master (seated, fourth from the left) and Ponnammann (standing, fourth from the left) with schoolmates, in an early 1970s photo at Jaffna Hindu College*



*Ponnammann and Prabhakaran at a training camp in Tamil Nadu*

projects was the development of a prototype biplane. We managed to construct the basic framework and skeleton, including a propeller. Unfortunately, the project was eventually halted due to financial constraints, and the group disbanded as members went on to pursue university education or moved abroad.

## Introduction to Prabhakaran and Philosophical Divergences

In 1977, Kumanan alias Kumanasami, an acquaintance I met regularly in the Jaffna Public Library reference section, introduced me to Pirabakaran. His brother was already a member of LTTE. Kumanan was one of thirteen members who split from LTTE and formed the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) organization.



*A Young Prabhakaran*

## Influence of Global Terrorism and Prabhakaran's Stance

The seventies were the heyday of terrorism committed by many Palestinian militant groups such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Black September Organization (BSO), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Japanese Red Army (JRA), Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), etc. They were involved in extreme terrorist activities, including hijacking planes, bombing public areas, kidnapping and murdering civilians, and targeting sports figures. These actions were globally condemned as acts of terrorism. Prabhakaran must have been influenced by the terrorist activities of Palestinian groups. When I met him for the first time, he said, "Liberation can be achieved only through terrorism." This statement really affected me. I countered that terrorism would not help our quest for national liberation. The acts of terrorism by the Palestinian movement have, in fact, significantly damaged all liberation movements around the world. These actions cast suspicion on them worldwide and blurred the lines between genuine liberation struggles and terrorism.



*Palestinian Fighters, 1970*



*Fusako Shigenobu, leader of the Japanese Red Army, trains in 1972. Lebanon.*

## Prabhakaran's Character and Leadership



*Teenage Prabhakaran*

At that time in 1977, I had not joined the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Our meetings usually happen at public places like temples, bus stands, and libraries. When we met at the bus stand, Prabhakaran would arrive on a bicycle and take me with him, and we would chat while peddling. Prabhakaran and I became close to the extent that he would leave his gun at my house when he visited. He trusted me to that level.

## Prabhakaran's Admiration for Historical Figures and Ideals of Martyrdom

Prabhakaran possessed a laudable quality: an eagerness to learn and a deep passion for reading. He was influenced by and considers Bhagat Singh, Veerapandiya Kattabomman, and Subhas Chandra Bose his role models. He had a particular admiration for Veerapandiya Kattabomman. However, I always viewed Kattabomman as unwise. I frequently debated this with Prabhakaran, arguing that true bravery would have been for Kattabomman to regroup his forces and continue the fight rather than face execution for defying the British tax demands. Prabhakaran, however, did not share this view. He passionately believed in the nobility of martyrdom and the honour of dying on the battlefield. He wished to be remembered as a heroic figure in Tamil history, akin to Veerapandiya Kattabomman.

In 1987, after the Indian army's arrival in Sri Lanka, Prabhakaran many times said to me,



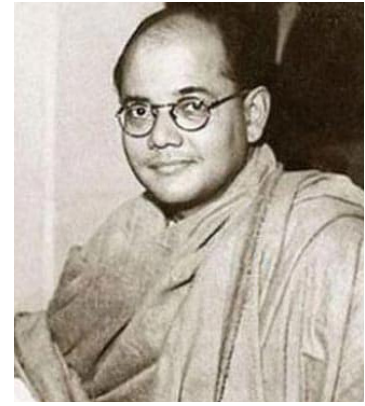
*The Abandoned Regal Theater in Jaffna, a Victim of War*



*Bhagat Singh*



*Veerapandiya  
Kattabomman featured  
on a 1999 Indian stamp*



*Netaji Subhas  
Chandra Bose*

"It's not wrong for a race to perish fighting for its freedom." This shocked me. I argued with him: Are we fighting to live or to annihilate our race and ourselves? His belief that a race can die for freedom persisted until the end. He lacked thoughts on sustaining the liberation struggle and ensuring survival. The Tamil literary books he read in his early years influenced his mindset. These books glorified dying in battle, which resonated with him.

During the 70s and 80s, Prabhakaran, other LTTE members, and I regularly frequented the Regal or Rio theaters for the first and second screenings. We had a keen interest in films related to war, history, westerns, and law & order. Hollywood movies often reached Sri Lanka late, premiering in Colombo before arriving in Jaffna. I watched the 1970 film 'Patton' at Regal theaters well before meeting Prabhakaran. The film, portraying American General George S. Patton, includes his famous quote during a speech to the 6th Armored Division on May 31, 1944: 'No bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country.'

Prabhakaran possessed many commendable qualities. He was dignified in his conduct,

and I regard him as a true gentleman. I never heard him insult or harshly criticize anyone. However, he was stubborn, adhering to his own inflexible beliefs, akin to the saying, "My rabbit has three legs." He was not receptive to differing viewpoints. Over time, he developed the conviction that anyone not actively contributing to the LTTE was a betrayer. Initially a liberation fighter with a character of comradeship, he gradually believed in his totalitarian decisions. Prabhakaran's repeated errors in judgment and misguided decisions led to the unnecessary loss of many young lives and civilians. Thousands were maimed, suffering life-altering injuries, tragedies that could have been avoided. It's important to acknowledge that the Sinhalese population also endured loss of lives and considerable suffering.

As an individual, Prabhakaran had limited knowledge and a lack of foresight. In my opinion, he fell short in his role as a leader. True leadership carries immense responsibility, particularly when it involves thousands of young people who trust in and commit to the cause, often at the cost of their lives. Prabhakaran failed to fulfill this vital duty, which is my most significant criticism of him.

## Confronting Ethical Dilemmas in LTTE's Strategies

In 1978, I was in Ponnammann's house, in his room, along with Prabhakaran. Prominent LTTE members Raghavan and Sellakili were also present, though Ponnammann himself was not there. During our political discussion, Sellakili made a disturbing statement. He said, "Even young Sinhalese children should not be spared. They must be killed. They will grow up to kill Tamils. It's better to kill them while they are still children." This statement deeply troubled me. Sellakili, known for his technical knowledge and high regard within the LTTE, advocating such an extreme stance was bewildering. I argued that such actions were unethical and immoral; one should not entertain such thoughts. However, to my shock, Prabhakaran supported Sellakili's view, stating, "Those children will grow up to kill Tamils, so there is nothing wrong in killing



*Sellakili and Prabhakaran at Udayarkaddu Training Camp, 1983*



*Lt. Col. Ponnammann and Prabhakaran at a Training Camp in Tamil Nadu*



*Commemorative Poster Honoring Ten Liberation Tigers, Including Lt. Col. Ponnammam, Who Perished in the 1987 Navatkuli Explosion, Jaffna*

them now." This stance left me profoundly disheartened. As the argument intensified, Prabhakaran and Sellakili eventually left. Raghavan was also present, and contrary to my expectation that he would support my view, he agreed with Sellakili, asserting the necessity of killing Sinhalese children. Raghavan's mindset in this regard was deeply shocking to me.

After joining the movement in 1978, My school friend Ponnammam was appointed to oversee the LTTE's training camps in India starting in 1983. I recall a particular incident when I was at the sixth batch training camp in Mettur, Tamil Nadu. I came from the Military Office (MO) to test my prototype improvised devices: a Claymore Mine and an Anti-Tank Mine, which I named 'Piglet,' designed based on the shaped charge concept. During this time, Ponnammam was not present at the camp. In the camp, from a corner, I kept hearing pitiful cries. When I inquired, I found a young man tied with a rope being brutally beaten by the members who ran the camp. When I asked about his inhumane punishment, I was told that he was being

punished for trying to escape from the camp. I stopped their beating and made them remove the rope. After several months, I learned the young man had been promised a boat to Sri Lanka. Then he was shot dead in the middle of the sea. This revelation filled me with rage. This would not have happened without the knowledge of Ponnammam and Prabhakaran. Ponnammam was my dear friend; there is no room for disagreement. However, I couldn't bear the thought of how he could allow this heinous crime. I felt sad

and angry with him and thought karma would take its toll. Eventually, Ponnammam died in an explosion while refueling an explosive-laden LTTE bowser in Navatkuli Jaffna.

## Anuradhapura massacre and its Underlying Politics

When I learned of the massacre of 146 innocent Sinhalese civilians in Anuradhapura on May 14, 1985, I was absolutely devastated and sickened. While some argue that the killings were in retaliation for the Sri Lankan military's massacres in Valvettiturai, two wrongs do not make a right. This act is a war crime and a crime against humanity. But behind this killing, there is a story to tell.

## Engagement with RAW and Ethical Confrontations

I was in Puducherry (Pondicherry) during the July 1983 riots when the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief contacted me.

Later, when Prabhakaran came to India, he established a connection with RAW in Chennai. Subsequently, I decided to break off my contact, but Prabhakaran asked me to maintain it. I stayed connected until I left the LTTE. I would often ride to Pondicherry to discuss various issues. At one point, the RAW officer suggested that the LTTE should massacre Sinhala civilians. I was angered and refuted this idea, stating that our struggle was against the Sinhala regime, not the civilians. When I met Prabhakaran and discussed this issue in Chennai, he informed me that RAW had also made similar requests to him.

A couple of months after our conversation, the Anuradhapura massacre occurred. Balasingam, the official spokesperson, issued a statement denying the LTTE's involvement in the killings. In my subsequent meeting with the RAW officer, he congratulated me on the brutal act. This left me in a dilemma: either RAW genuinely wanted the massacre to occur, or they were evaluating the LTTE to understand its motives. Following the incident, they might have been reassessing the LTTE, or they might have genuinely been offering congratulations. I cannot conclusively determine their true intentions.

However, I didn't delve further into the matter. At that time, I was deeply engaged in military development and research at the Military Office (MO). Shortly after the Anuradhapura killings, the first Thimbu Talks commenced. Prabhakaran tasked me with representing the LTTE in these talks alongside Tilakar, who worked in my MO. Years later, two or three of the LTTE who participated in the killings admitted to me that they had conducted the attack and how they had escaped. I have always been vehemently against the killing of innocent Sinhalese civilians.

I came across accusations in the Sri Lankan media that Pulendran, the then LTTE leader in Trincomalee, had been killing Sinhalese civilians. During a meeting with him in Jaffna, I confronted Pulendran about this and sternly warned him that I would shoot him on the spot if he continued attacking civilians. Notably, in the late 1970s, I interviewed both Pulendran and Seelan for recruitment into the LTTE while in Trincomalee. I chose Seelan as a new member but had reservations about Pulendran due to his immaturity. Despite my decision, someone else later recruited him into the LTTE.

## **INDIAN ARMY'S ARRIVAL, THILEEPAN'S HUNGER STRIKE...**

When the Indian Army arrived in Sri Lanka, Tamil people welcomed them with garlands, drums, and music. The relationship between the Indian Army and the Jaffna people was initially cordial to the extent that if the LTTE attacked the Indian Army, the people themselves would retaliate against the LTTE. Prabhakaran wanted to disrupt this friendly relationship.

You need to understand that we did not initiate an armed struggle by placing our trust in India. India bears no responsibility for resolving the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka. Whether the goal is Tamil Eelam or a federal state, the reality is that a complete military victory is unattainable. Ultimately, all parties must come to the negotiating table. Western powers and the Soviet Bloc allowed India a free hand in dealing with Sri Lanka, a fact made clear to the Tigers by both blocs. India achieved its objective by bringing Sri Lanka under its foreign policy influence through the India-Sri Lanka Agreement (an agreement between India and Sri Lanka, not with the LTTE).



*Thileepan Speaking from the Hunger Strike Stage*

Part of the Indo-Sri Lanka Treaty recognized the traditional land of the Northern and Eastern Tamils of Sri Lanka and annexed it as a province for the Northern and Eastern Provincial Governments. Many unresolved issues are left for future negotiations regarding the devolution of power for the Tamil province. Prabhakaran was wrong if he expected India to hand Tamil Eelam on a silver platter. It was Prabhakaran's fault if he misguidedly believed Tamil Eelam could only be achieved through 100% military victory without foresight.

During the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord period, it's a fact that the LTTE secretly brought in an arms shipment without the knowledge of both the Indian and Sri Lankan governments, despite LTTE's denials. On one side, the LTTE feigned the surrendering of weapons to the Indian Peace-keeping Force while

simultaneously smuggling in arms. The Sri Lankan Navy's interception of this shipment led to the arrest of 17 LTTE members, including Kumarpappa and Pulendran. Many, like Pulendran, had merely gone to view the ship. Prabhakaran exacerbated the situation by providing cyanide capsules to these 17 members on October 5, 1987. Tragically, 13 of them died. I view this cyanide incident as an unnecessary loss of life.

Prabhakaran created all the violations and dramas to destroy the entire process. Thileepan might have genuinely desired to sacrifice his life, hoping to achieve something beneficial for the Tamil people. However, Prabhakaran manipulated Thileepan's intentions for his own political ends. I was with Prabhakaran on the day Thileepan began his hunger strike. Prabhakaran asked Kasi Anandan and me to escort Thileepan to the hunger strike site in Nallur. After Thileepan's death, Prabhakaran





*Commemoration Poster for 12 Tamil Tigers, Including Kumarappa, LTTE Area Commander for Batticaloa, and Pulendran, LTTE Area Commander for Trincomalee, Dated 5 October 1987*

directed Kasi Anandan and me to hand over his body to the Faculty of Medicine in Tirunelveli. I conveyed his body there, where Rajini Thiranagama, head of the Department of Anatomy, along with the other Doctors, received it.

The five demands made by Thileepan during his hunger strike were not major or complicated. The solution was on the card of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord. Forming an interim government and confining the Sri Lanka army back into barracks, etc., needed some time to settle. Both Thileepan's hunger strike and the cyanide incident were orchestrated by Prabhakaran to incite the Tamil population against the Indian army. This strategy ultimately proved to be successful.

## **Evaluating the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and LTTE's Strategy**

India is not the adversary; Prabhakaran deliberately orchestrated the prevailing situation. As a result, the Tamil community now endures losses far more significant than what they initially encountered, with effects that are expected to linger for two to three generations. Unfortunately, post-1980, the central committee of the LTTE lost its effectiveness, paving the way for Prabhakaran to consolidate his position as the sole leader. It's common for individuals to develop an inflated sense of self-importance upon gaining a modicum of fame and power, a tendency comparable to a 'messiah complex.' This complex is characterized by an individual believing they are, or are destined to become, a savior with a grand mission, often leading to a disconnect from reality and rational decision-making.

**This Dialogue with Anton Master: to be continued in our next issue**

# Understanding Broiler Chicken Consumption: Insights from a Training Session



BY:  
**Our Vavuniya Correspondent:**  
**S.Saravanan**

In a recent training session for poultry farmers in Vavuniya, Dr. Kiruba Nanda Kumaran, a veterinary surgeon, shared his expertise on the topic of broiler chicken consumption. The primary focus of the session revolved around the question: "Is eating broiler chicken meat beneficial or harmful?" This led to a detailed discussion among the participants about the health implications of consuming broiler chicken.

## Health Risks Linked to Broiler Chicken

The participants raised concerns about the health risks associated with broiler chicken. Dr. Kumaran noted that these worries included connections to diabetes, heart attacks, high cholesterol, hypertension, and cancer. The discussion compared broiler chickens, often raised on diets considered harmful to humans, to country chickens known for their natural diet and perceived health benefits.

## The Rapid Growth Concern

A central point of the discussion was the rapid growth rate of broiler chickens. Dr. Kumaran observed that while traditional chickens take about six months to mature,



modern broilers reach maturity in just 40-50 days. He listened as participants voiced their concerns that this accelerated growth could have potential health implications for consumers.



*Dr. Kiruba Nanda  
Kumaran*

## Hormonal Injections and Early Puberty in Girls

Dr. Kumaran highlighted a significant issue discussed during the session: the alleged use of hormone injections in broiler chickens and its potential link to early puberty in girls. He cited observations from participants, particularly middle-aged women, who noticed their daughters reaching puberty around 10 years old,



earlier than the historical norm. This was attributed to the consumption of broiler chicken, with participants referencing medical opinions and information from social media.

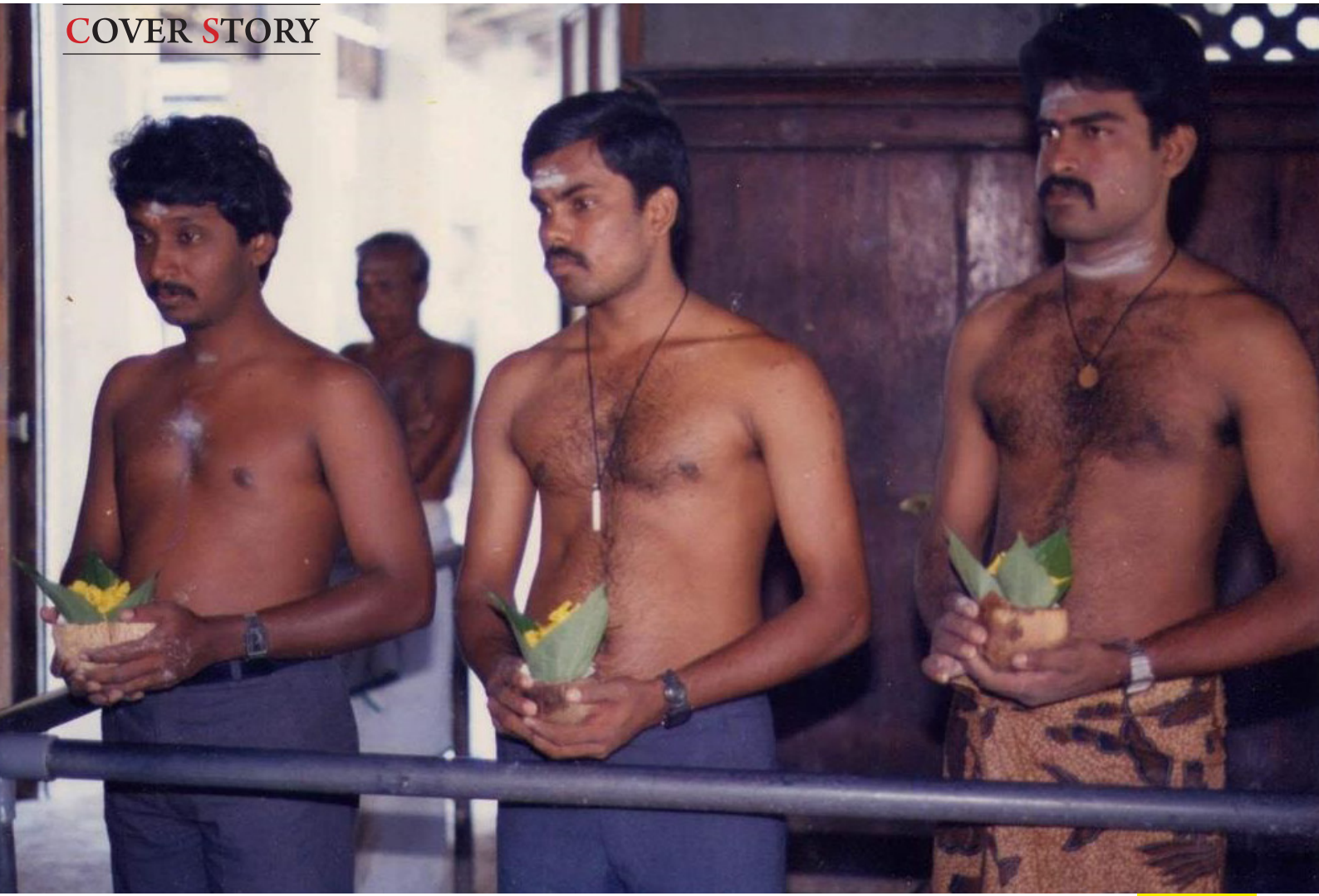
### **Examining Dietary Patterns and Lifestyle Changes**

Dr. Kumaran facilitated a discussion on the participants' chicken consumption habits and the diets of their children, which often included a high intake of sugary and processed foods and regular consumption of fast food. He emphasized the importance of considering how lifestyle changes and

reduced physical activities compared to past generations could impact health and growth.

### **Dispelling Myths and Concluding Observations**

In his closing remarks, Dr. Kumaran addressed the myths surrounding broiler chickens. He stressed that globally, chickens are selected based on rigorous research and raised in controlled environments with carefully calculated nutrients. He clarified that the impact of hormone injections on human growth is unsupported by scientific evidence. However, he acknowledged that the misuse of antibiotics in poultry farming is a valid concern. Dr. Kumaran concluded by reassuring the participants that well-raised and properly cooked broiler chicken is generally safe for consumption.



*Former LTTE Commanders Ratha (Mannar), Pulendran (Trincomalee), and Suseelan (Kilinochchi District) at Thirukketheeswaram Temple*

# Mahathaya's Saga:

Part  
02

## Power, Paranoia, and Politics in the LTTE



BY:

**Kaniyan Pungundran**

கணியன் பூங்குன்றன்

Before delving into the details that led to Mahathaya's arrest and subsequent execution, let's take a detour to explore the broader impact of this situation. The Mahathaya's dilemma was far-reaching, resulting not only in his death but also in the demise of 14 other high-ranking LTTE officers. This figure was confirmed by LTTE leader Prabhakaran himself to one of our sources, albeit with a tone of regretful guilt, as if acknowledging a grave mistake. Additionally, a significant number of fighters, numbers varying from 100 to 450 from the Mahathaya faction, were killed. Nobody knows the actual number.

According to multiple sources within the LTTE that spoke with the Jaffna Monitor, both LTTE chief Prabhakaran and intelligence chief Pottu Amman acted in ways that were considered unreasonable. While Prabhakaran's actions might have stemmed from paranoia towards RAW (Research and Analysis Wing, India's intelligence agency) or insecurity about Mahathaya, who at the time had become a prominent face of the LTTE, overshadowing Prabhakaran, many believe that Pottu Amman's actions were driven by a specific agenda to climb the leadership ladder within the LTTE.

## **The Tragic Fate of LTTE Commanders: The Story of Suseelan and Many Others**

The LTTE leadership carried out widespread executions that went far beyond just Mahathaya. Among those executed were technically skilled Susselan, the area commander of Kilinochchi, and Sengamalm, who had a significant role under Mahathaya at the time of his capture. Sengamalm was once a trusted bodyguard of Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader. Additionally, Prem Master, who played an important part in the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) - a covert arm of the LTTE functioning as an international organization aimed at helping Tamils - was also executed, among others.

Entangled in a chaotic nexus of brutality and authority were several influential members of the LTTE. Brigadier Theepan, previously the chief bodyguard of Mahathaya, ascended to command the LTTE's formidable northern front military units. Concurrently, Colonel Jeyam, who had overseen the vital Vavuniya sector, suffered unspeakable torment and distress. Amid their tribulations, both Jayam

and Theepan were subjected to the brutal and inhumane removal of their fingernails and toenails.

Within the LTTE, it is said that Prabhakaran summoned Jayam following his release. Prabhakaran reportedly expressed remorse and suggested that Jayam leaves for a foreign country, offering LTTE's assistance in helping him settle there. However, as a battle-hardened fighter, Jayam refused to leave the organization despite the unimaginable tortures he had endured. He declared his intention to fight until death. True to his word, he died on May 18, 2009, the final day of the LTTE's military existence.

## **Suseelan: The Rise and Fall of an LTTE Commander**

Suseelan, whose real name is Gowriharan, was known as Kannan among his village community and school friends. Originating from a well-known and prosperous upper-middle-class family in Nellyyady, Jaffna district, Suseelan's father, Rasanayagam, owned a petrol and service station at the Nellyyady junction. In addition to this, Rasanayagam also owned extensive properties in the Jaffna and Wannu regions, including farms. Suseelan studied at Hartley College, Point Pedro. From childhood, he was technically sound and mechanically inclined. In a candid talk with 'Jaffna Monitor,' a close friend of Suseelan, who studied with him at Hartley College, said that Suseelan had always been exceptionally talented in technical fields. He demonstrated this during a school exhibition by ingeniously creating biogas from cow dung and chicken droppings and then using this biogas to power a generator. This innovation was particularly significant as, at that time, the Jaffna district was isolated from electricity supply, and sources like petrol and diesel were extremely scarce.

As a member of the second batch of trainees under Indian officers at Jawalamukhi, Suseelan stood out due to his remarkable abilities. One of his batchmates shared insights about Suseelan with Jaffna Monitor. He characterized Suseelan as being not only kind and good-hearted but also exceptionally intelligent. According to this batchmate, Suseelan was distinguished by his strict discipline, natural leadership qualities, and an unwavering passion for freedom.

Suseelan was indeed a prominent figure in the LTTE and a key leader. His presence was significant during the event when the LTTE surrendered its arms, a maneuver orchestrated by the Indian Government. This highly publicized ceremony was held at the Palaly airfield in October 1987, where "Yogi" Yogaratham formally relinquished his arms. Suseelan accompanied Yogi at this event and surrendered his pistol as well.

A significant display of Suseelan's abilities emerged during the Battle of Pooneryn in November 1993, also known as Operation Thavalai Paachchal (Frog Leap) by the LTTE. In this engagement, the LTTE successfully



*Newspaper Clipping: LTTE's Arms Surrender Ceremony at Palaly Airfield, October 1987, featuring 'Yogi' Yogaratham and Suseelan Surrendering Their Arms*

captured two T55 tanks. The difficulty, however, lay in maneuvering these tanks, as the fighters lacked training and familiarity with their operation. Sources from the LTTE reveal that Suseelan, armed with his robust mechanical expertise, skillfully managed to operate these tanks, overcoming a complex and challenging task. According to an LTTE source, one of these tanks was extensively used, including in a significant instance where it was successfully deployed to attack a Dvora naval boat.

Another friend of Suseelan shared additional insights into his family's ties with the LTTE. He mentioned that Suseelan's family were among the early supporters of the LTTE, dating back to the late 1970s. When Mahathaya established his base in Nellyyady, a few young men rented one of the family houses owned by Suseelan's family, posing as students. One day, these individuals launched an attack on a police jeep, resulting in the deaths of four police officers. A Tamil police officer named Sittampalam narrowly escaped with minor injuries. This incident led Suseelan's family to realize that those residing in their house were not students but LTTE militants, and their younger son Gowriharan



*The Hindu Newspaper Clipping: October 1987 - LTTE Arms Surrender Ceremony at Palaly Airfield with 'Yogi' Yogaratham and Suseelan Surrendering Their Arms*



*Photo of One of the Two T55 Tanks Captured by the LTTE, Skillfully Operated by Suseelan*

was assisting them. Gowriharan later joined the LTTE, adopting the name Suseelan.

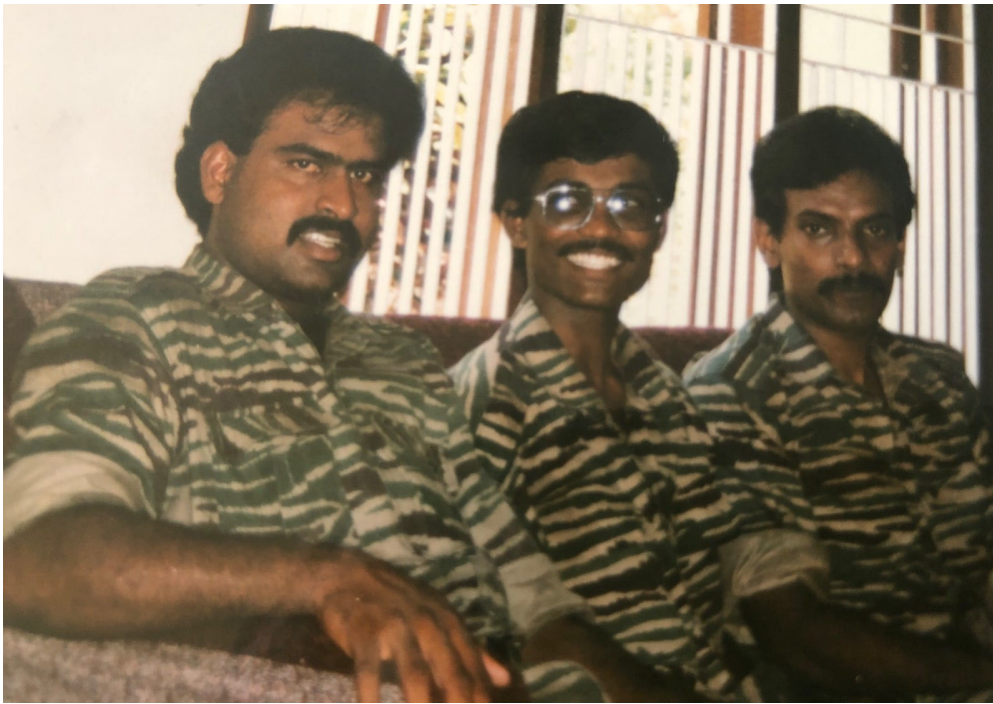
There's a fascinating story behind his nom de guerre, 'Suseelan.' Credible sources told the Jaffna Monitor that Gowriharan selected this name in honour of his cousin Suseelan, a high-ranking officer in the Malaysian army who tragically died in an accident. It was mentioned that Suseelan's family moved back to Nellyady from Malaysia after the Second World War, and some relatives continue to live in Malaysia.

Visu, the assassin of Amirthalingam, along with Dominic, previously the leader of LTTE's Jaffna district political wing, Newton, a senior member of the LTTE's intelligence wing, and Mohan, were all childhood friends of Suseelan, having studied together and hailed from the same place Nelliady.

Dominic was once a prominent figure in the LTTE, serving as the leader of LTTE's Jaffna

district political wing. A former prominent LTTE guard shared an intriguing story about him with the Jaffna Monitor. He mentioned that LTTE supremo Prabhakaran often took credit for the victories of the LTTE. According to our source, who served in the LTTE for nearly 30 years, he never witnessed Prabhakaran accepting responsibility for a military loss. There was a saying in the LTTE, he noted: “வென்றால் தேசியத் தலைவரின் சீரிய சிந்தனை. தோற்றால் தளபதிகளின் தவறு,” which loosely translates to, 'If won, it's the wise thought of the national leader. If lost, it's the fault of the commanders.'

During the Battle of Janakapura, also known as the Maṇalāru attack on July 25, 1993, which led to a significant defeat for the LTTE, Dominic, renowned for his sharp wit, boldly questioned who would be held accountable in the current situation. S.P. Thamilselvan, who worked under Dominic then, noted this comment and relayed it to Prabhakaran.



*From Left: Susilan, Tamil Selvan, Raju - Prominent Members of the LTTE*

Enraged by the comment, Prabhakaran swiftly dismissed Dominic from his position and expelled him from the LTTE, appointing Thamilselvan as his successor. Consequently, Thamilselvan ascended to the leadership of the LTTE's political wing, a rise attributed to his cunning political maneuvering.

An intriguing tale also surrounds Mohan, an early childhood friend of Suseelan. His father, Sankunni Nair, a Malayalee, was married to a Sri Lankan Tamil woman. Sankunni Nair owned a tea shop in Nellyyadi, famously known as 'Sangunni Kadai,' which was quite popular then. Mohan, an LTTE fighter, mainly works as a driver. He was even rumoured to have been the driver for Prabhakaran and his wife Mathivathani on their wedding day. During the tenure of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), Sankunni Nair kept up amicable relations with the Indian Army due to their shared roots. Sadly, this association had a dire outcome; he was assassinated by the LTTE under suspicion of being an informant for India.

When Mahathaya, his commander, was

arrested, Suseelan remained undaunted. He confided to his friends, who later shared with the Jaffna Monitor, that he harboured no fear of arrest or repercussions, firmly believing he had committed no wrongdoing. During these turbulent times, a close friend of Suseelan met with him in Vavuniya and urged him to leave the LTTE and relocate to a foreign country. Despite

this advice, Suseelan resolutely refused. He was adamant in believing that he had done nothing wrong and could not abandon the LTTE. He also expressed that he couldn't run away like a coward, especially without making mistakes.

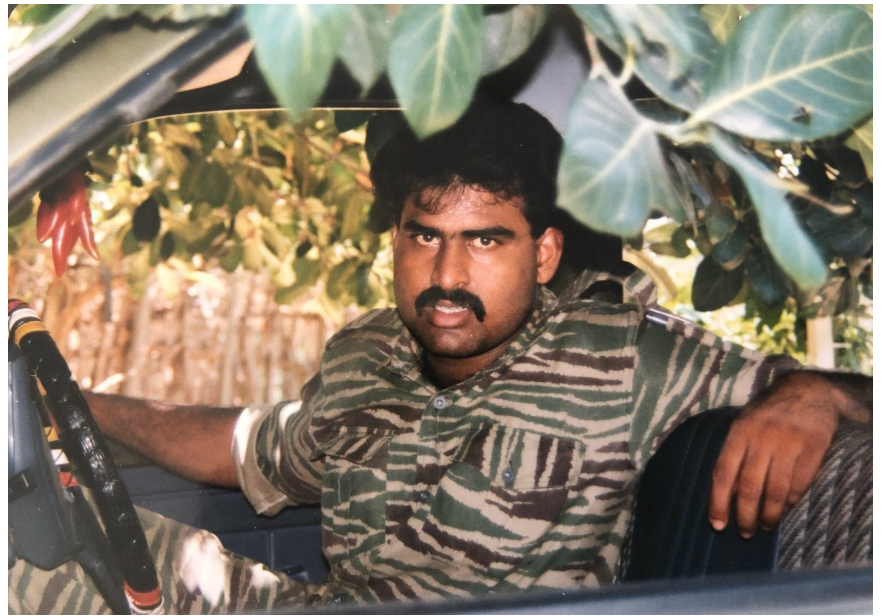
Suseelan was not immediately arrested following Mahathaya's arrest; he was allowed to move freely for several months. It was during this time that Suseelan married his girlfriend, Kalpana, whose two elder brothers and another sister, all LTTE fighters, had perished in battle. The wedding, orchestrated by the LTTE, saw the attendance of notable figures, including Anton Balasingam, the LTTE's chief political strategist, and Balasingham Nadesan, the head of the organization's police force. There were rumours that Pottu Amman, the LTTE's intelligence chief, was the chief guest at the wedding, but insiders dismissed these as baseless. Although the LTTE expressed a desire to sponsor the event, Suseelan's father, Rasanayagam, a prosperous businessman, insisted on funding the wedding himself. The entire event was meticulously documented through photographs and videos by the LTTE.



During a standard one-month leave granted to newlyweds by the LTTE, Suseelan was summoned by Pottu Amman less than three weeks after his wedding. After he met with Pottu Amman, Suseelan was arrested and never returned. Initially, Suseelan's father and siblings knew about his arrest but chose to keep it from his mother, affectionately known as Mani Akka, who had a special fondness for him as the youngest child in the family. However, a neighbour inadvertently told Mani Akka about Suseelan's arrest. This revelation led to her tragic and immediate death from shock. The LTTE leadership's callous nature was further highlighted during the last rites of Suseelan's mother. According to Srilankan Tamil culture, the youngest son traditionally performs these rites. Despite the family's pleading with the LTTE leadership to allow Suseelan to fulfill this sacred duty, their requests were mercilessly denied.

A close friend of Suseelan spoke with the 'Jaffna Monitor' about how deeply Suseelan's family was affected by the back-to-back shocks. He mentioned that Anton Balasingam, the LTTE's chief strategist, frequently visited Suseelan's house in Nellyyadi. Suseelan's home, renowned for its extensive library and a wide array of English news magazines worldwide, was an appealing stop for Balasingam. During his visits, he often asked for 'egg coffee,' a unique mixture of coffee, egg, and hot water, thoroughly blended, which was specially prepared by Suseelan's mother, Mani Akka.

He also said that Additionally, prominent LTTE figures like Shankar, founder of the air wing and marine division, and Selvarasa



*Suseelan*

Pathmanathan, the chief arms procurement officer, frequently visited Suseelan's house, often boldly requesting meals from Suseelan's mother in a rightful manner akin to asking for food from someone's own mother. However, Suseelan's close friend lamented to 'Jaffna Monitor' that despite these connections, none of these LTTE members offered any assistance to his family in bringing Suseelan home for the last rite.

Up to the present, the LTTE has not issued any formal statement concerning the supposed misdeeds of Suseelan or the rationale behind his execution. Additionally, the exact date of his death remains undocumented. Suseelan's family, as per a close friend, has been waiting for over three decades. They are cognizant of his passing but are eager to determine the precise date to conduct a Moksha Archana, a ritual performed for the tranquillity of departed souls. This friend also mentioned that after the war's conclusion and the demise of LTTE leaders Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman, numerous senior LTTE officials approached Suseelan's family, extending their sympathies and expressing regret for their failure to prevent the injustices Suseelan suffered.

*Will be continued.....*

# Defying Party Lines: Angajan Ramanathan's Bold Move to Support President Wickremesinghe



In a surprising twist of political allegiance, Angajan Ramanathan, a prominent Member of Parliament for the Jaffna District from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, has reportedly made an unexpected decision to support President Ranil Wickremesinghe. This move comes as a surprise, particularly as it contradicts the official stance of his party.

On a significant four-day tour last Thursday, President Ranil Wickremesinghe marked his presence in Jaffna, engaging in a series of meetings and events across the district. In a display of unanticipated camaraderie, MP Angajan Ramanathan was observed participating in every meeting attended by President Wickremesinghe. Political pundits are abuzz, interpreting Ramanathan's consistent presence at these events as a tacit endorsement of the President.

Sources further reveal that Angajan Ramanathan

didn't just attend these meetings; he was a conspicuous presence, often taking a prominent position on stage alongside President Wickremesinghe. This conduct is being viewed as an indirect but clear gesture of support for the President. This development is particularly noteworthy as the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, to which Ramanathan belongs, currently does not form part of President Wickremesinghe's government.

Adding to the intrigue, it has been reported that Angajan's participation in these meetings was not the result of a formal invitation, suggesting a deliberate and personal choice to align with President Wickremesinghe, thereby challenging his party's directives. This bold political move by Ramanathan is poised to ignite discussions and debates in the corridors of power, indicating a potential shift in the political landscape

# The History of the Tigers Uniform



By:  
**K.S. Lakshmi**

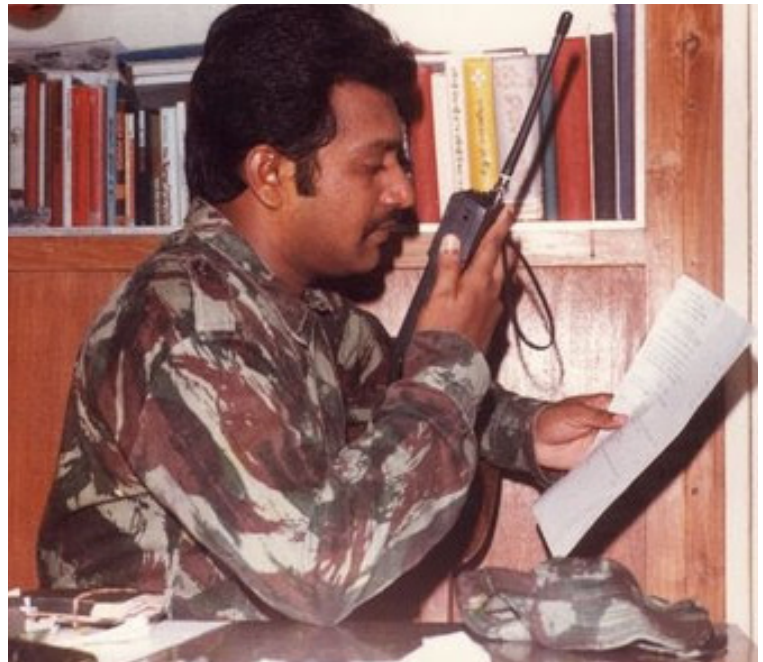
In 1981, in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, the first uniform of the Liberation Tigers was designed by Nataraj Master. Nataraj Master also created the emblem of the Liberation Tigers. During this period, the Tigers lacked the resources to design and sew a unique uniform. LTTE supremo Prabhakaran devised an idea. He directed Nataraj Master to modify a Tamil Nadu police khaki uniform purchased from a shop in Madurai by painting stripes with

a small brush using oil paint. Prabhakaran aimed for the uniform to mimic the stripes of a tiger's skin; thus, the first uniform of the Tigers was created.

Wearing this uniform, Prabhakaran took a photograph while holding an SMG gun, which had been snatched from Police Officer Bastiampillai after killing him at Maduppannai on April 7, 1978. This was the first photo of Prabhakaran taken in uniform. Lieutenant Seelan, also known as Charles Anthony, was also photographed wearing the same uniform. These photos were taken by Nataraj Master at his home.



*Prabhakaran in 1981, wearing the first-ever uniform of the Liberation Tigers, designed by Nataraj Master. This iconic photo was captured in Madurai on the first floor of Nataraj Master's house, with a saree belonging to Nataraj Master's wife serving as the backdrop*

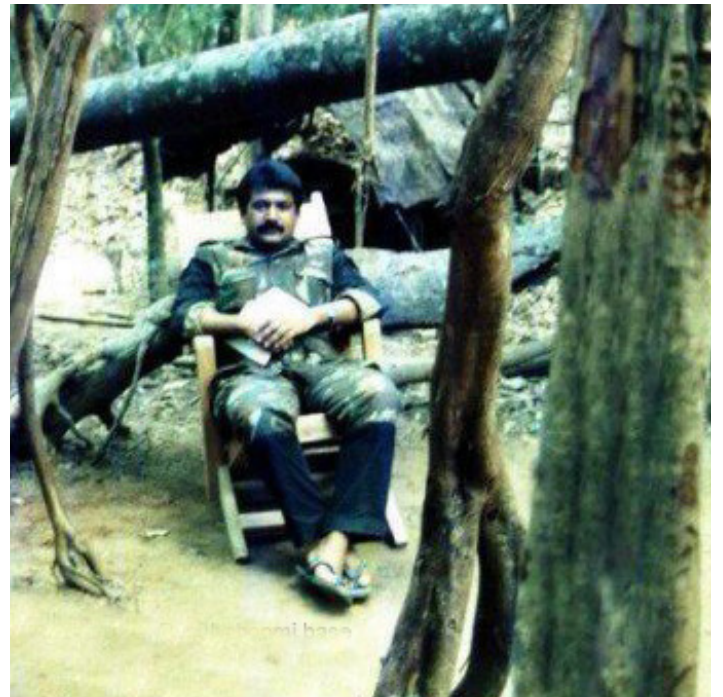


*Prabhakaran wearing a foreign military uniform, a gift from a friend in London who visited him in Chennai during the 1983-84 period.*

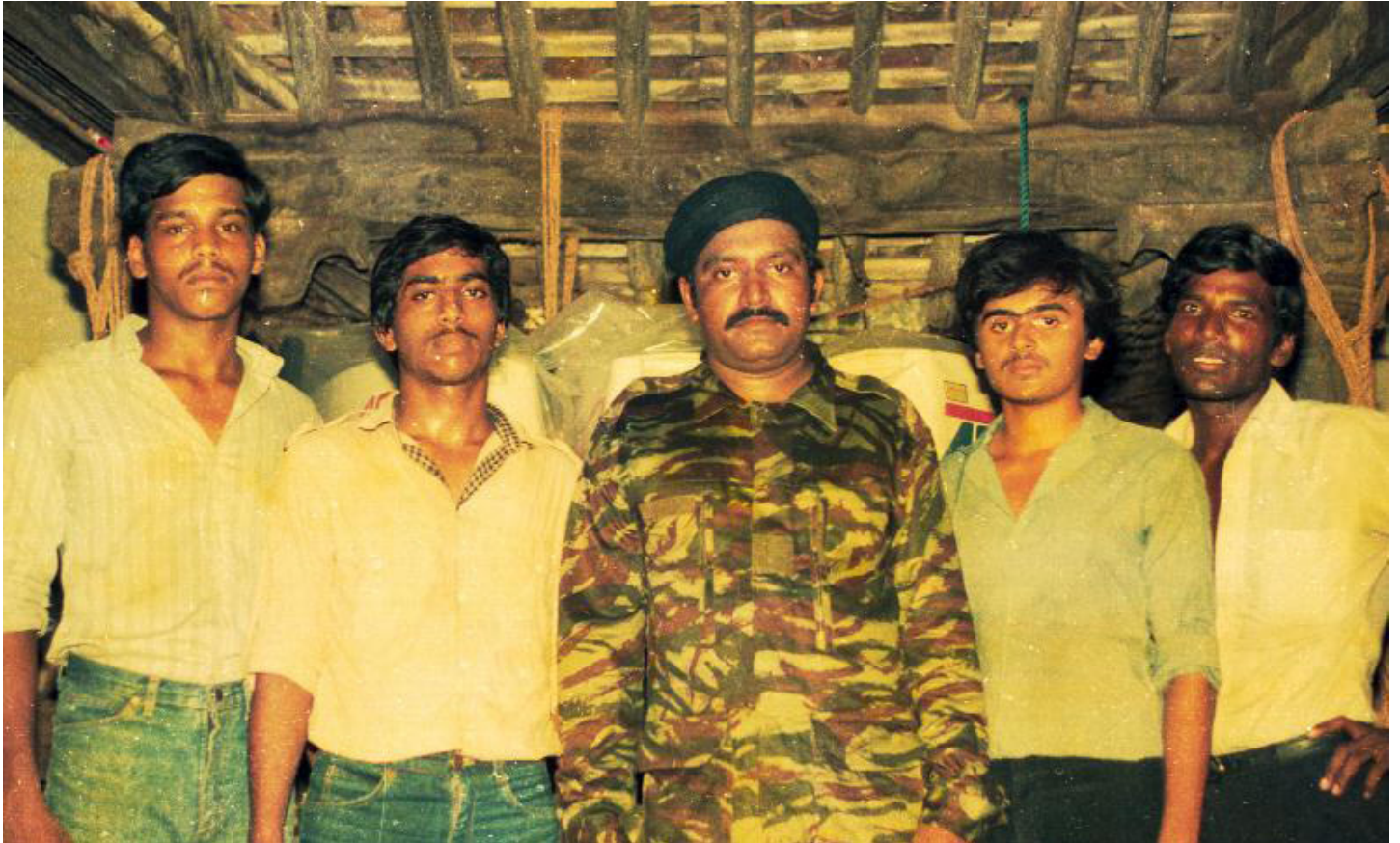


*Kiddu, the then Jaffna region commander of the LTTE, pictured with his fighters in 1986 in Jaffna. Due to the urban setting of their operations, Kiddu did not prioritize uniforms, resulting in the fighters wearing shorts provided by the LTTE.*

After the ethnic riots in July 1983, the Indian government began assisting Tamil militant organizations. Consequently, the Tigers started using Tamil Nadu as a base for their operations. During this time, they donned uniforms similar to those of the Indian Army, which were purchased in Chennai. These uniforms were also worn during the conflict with the Indian Army in 1987. This led to some unique incidents, as both the Tigers and the Indian Army, clad in identical uniforms, clashed. In close combat, it became difficult to distinguish friend from foe, creating confusion. To mitigate this, Prabhakaran implemented a change. He instructed that black cloth be added to the calf and forearm sections of the uniforms worn by the Tigers, aiding in identifying their fighters during battles.



*Prabhakaran at the Punithabhoomi Base in Nittikaikkulam, Mullaitivu, in the late 1980s. Pictured wearing an Indian army uniform, uniquely modified with black cloth added to the calf and forearm sections*



*Prabhakaran in Chennai (1983-84), donning a foreign military uniform gifted by a friend from London, while his fighters appear in civilian attire*

In 1989, negotiations started between the Tigers and the Premadasa government. After this, there was a decrease in Indian Army operations, and an unofficial ceasefire was observed from October 1989. During this period, Prabhakaran fully realized his uniform project. In the Erode region of Tamil Nadu, a stronghold of Tiger supporters, fabric for the uniforms was procured. These fabrics were then transported by boat to Sri Lanka and delivered to a camp in the Niththikaikulam forest, where uniforms for the Tigers were produced. Numerous tailors from Jaffna and Chavakachcheri were coerced into making these uniforms in the forest. A Tiger member named Ajith, who now resides in England, was responsible for this stitching unit.

Following the withdrawal of the Indian Army from the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka in 1990, the Tigers' commander in

the Batticaloa and Ampara districts, Karuna Amman, commissioned local weavers in Batticaloa to produce the uniforms. Later, uniforms made abroad by the Tigers' international representative, Kumaran Pathmanathan, also known as KP, were utilized by the Tigers few a times only.

In 1996, after relocating to the Vanni region, the Tigers adopted distinct uniforms for each of their divisions - land, naval, air, and black tiger forces - each distinguishable only by color. Separate uniforms were also used by the Tigers' police and border forces. In 1983, the LTTE's first book, titled 'State Terrorism and Armed Revolution,' featured Prabhakaran's first photo in uniform. In this photo, he is seen wearing the Tigers' initial uniform. Prabhakaran's final photograph, taken when he lay dead in Nandikadal on May 18, 2009, also shows him wearing the Tigers' uniform.



# Captain PART 02

Translated from the original Tamil short story *kaṭṭan* (கட்டன்) by Shobasakthi. The original story is available at his website [www.shobasakthi.com](http://www.shobasakthi.com)



Translated by:  
*eḷuttukkiṇiyavan*  
(எழுத்துக்கினியவன்)

When sunlight pinched him, he jumped up in alarm. A tall temple tower was visible at a distance. He congratulated himself for sailing all the way to India all alone with a vēṭṭi for a sail. He noticed that the boat was moving neither forward nor backwards but was circling in place. He raised his hand and realized that the sea was completely still with no sign of a wind. When he tried to push the boat forward with a quant pole, the pole touched the ground. He was excited. But the boat refused to budge. When he finally made up his mind to jump into the water and swim ashore, he noticed two boats zipping towards him at high speed. As the boats approached, Poṅrāsā began to whistle enthusiastically,

thinking ‘Indian navy.’ He was relieved, imagining that the navy itself would give him a ride towards Rāmēswarem.

When the navy boats surrounded Poṅrāsā’s, he adjusted his vēṭṭi, buttoned his shirt all the way up to the neck, unrolled his sleeves to their full length, and wore a cultivated look and the expression of a refugee. He brought his hands together above his head in greeting and said “vaṇakkam sir.” The four sailors who jumped into his boat started beating him up without uttering a word. “Sir, I am Tamil,” Poṅrāsā pleaded. The beatings did not stop. His lip cracked open, and a crimson streak of blood ran down his white shirt. Only when they hauled Poṅrāsā into their boat, towed his, and sped towards the shore did he realize that the temple tower at the distance did not belong to the Rameswaram temple, but to the Naiṅāṭivu Nāgabhūshaṇi Ambāḷ temple. He was disgusted to realize that, after embarking from Vēlaṅai and sailing through the night, he had only reached the island just next to Vēlaṅai, Naiṅāṭivu.

Naiṅāṭivu was a fortified base of the Sri Lankan navy. A vessel could leave or arrive at Naiṅāṭivu only with the express permission of the navy. At that time some four thousand people lived in Naiṅāṭivu. Not even a speck of dust could stir in that island without the navy’s knowledge. Poṅrāsā’s boat had shattered and breached such an iron fortress.

Poṅrāsā was stark naked, tied to a flagpole in front of a sub-commander’s office. He was halfway up the pole. Surely the sailors would have felt a tinge of envy when they regarded Poṅrāsā’s burly arms and legs, his broad shoulders, and strong chest. Droplets of blood kept blossoming like tiny little ruby gems throughout his coal black body. The two blue-gem ear studs from his underwear were now inside the drawer of the sub-commander’s desk. The navy was busy trying to piece

together what kind of Tiger they had netted. What confused them was that this Tiger was over fifty years old. Even Pirapākaraṅ, the supreme leader of Tigers, was just 36 then.

As the sun scorched, Poṅrāsā was crying out loud. He pleaded in all three languages: Tamil, Sinhala, and English. His heart said, “I will survive this calamity.” But if he relaxed, he was afraid that the navy might shoot him and throw his body into the sea. So, he kept up his theater of screaming and begging for water without any let up. When he shuddered, pleading for water, he was fed seawater. Poṅrāsā had indeed made a mistake. As soon as he was caught, he could have admitted to the truth – that he was on a clueless drunken pursuit of his sons who had fled to India. But he thought that admitting he was sailing to India might lead to bigger difficulties. So, he had claimed that he was out fishing but was blown off course. But the sailors only needed a couple of questions to conclude that he knew nothing about the sea, and that he was on a stolen boat.

For two days, he languished on the flagpole without food or water. On the third day, he was locked up in a room. There was plenty of creepy crawly traffic in the room. When the sun set, it was hell for Poṅrāsā. Drunken sailors would drag him out of the room and, in the name of an inquiry, would ask outrageously silly questions. Poṅrāsā would respond with even more outrageous answers. He would draw a map to explain to them where Tiger camps lay, where the Tiger leader probably was, and where Soosai, the leader of Sea Tigers, might have been at that moment. The next day, the sailors would ask him to draw the same map. He would draw a map that was in complete contrast to the previous day’s map. Pirapākaraṅ’s camp that was in Point Pedro the previous day would have now magically transported itself to



Chāvakachchēri. The sailors beat Poṅrāsā with coconut tree petioles, rope, and thick poles. Within a week, Poṅrāsā's skin had peeled off from half of his body.

After a week, the beatings subsided. The sailors now understood very clearly that they had caught a petty thief and not a Tiger. Poṅrāsā had also become adept at giving the navy what it wanted. He was an excellent cook. He cooked tasty meals for the commanders and gained their sympathy. Eventually he had morphed into a sort of pet for the navy. They let him go out into the village. He roamed around the village all day and returned to the navy camp to sleep in his room. He had cleaned out his room and fashioned a bed for him out of wooden planks.

The villagers called him 'navy aiyā.' They were afraid of him because of his navy connection. Palmyra toddy and fish were plentiful in Naiṅātīvu, Since there was no prospect of escaping the island without the navy's consent, Poṅrāsā thought no more about escape. He stopped blaming his sons who had fled to India. Perhaps he realized what would have been in store for them had the youngsters been caught by the same people who had caught him, an old man, and had treated him like a goat waiting to be skinned. Occasionally he went to the navy camp. But otherwise, he stayed in the temple hall. After all, this was the island that gave Maṅimēkalai, the heroine of the eponymous Tamil epic, the magical bottomless vessel





amudhasurabi, from which one could keep drawing rice without end. Poṅrāsā would never run out of rice either! With the temple rice, the almsgiving hall of the temple, and the butter and jam from the navy camp, he put on some weight.

In the mornings, after a thorough and intense checking by the navy, a motorboat left Naiṅāṭīvu to Puṅgudutīvu Kuṛikaṭṭuvāṅ port. The navy permitted people to board that boat only if they had some absolutely essential business that required travel. Poṅrāsā sent a letter to his wife through one such passenger.

For three months Gṅaṅammā was mourning her husband, not knowing whether he was alive or dead. When the letter arrived in her hands, she was totally confused. The letter had said that ‘the civil administration in Naiṅāṭīvu is excellent. As soon as you receive this letter, come to Naiṅāṭīvu. The navy is very supportive of me.’ When Gṅaṅammā showed the letter to a neighbor, he had advised her to take it to Tigers because he suspected that the letter contained a trap. This is how the letter ended up in the Tiger office.

The New Year celebration in the navy camp was raucous. That day Poṅrāsā had made a special seafood feast with cuttlefish, prawns, and crabs, making the commanders very happy. The commanders gifted him a full bottle of Mendis arrack. He sat on the beach, enjoying it little by little. The cold December wind made him shiver. From the south, he saw a skyrocket from Puṅgudutīvu shoot up and burst into a colorful bouquet. When half of the arrack bottle was empty, he felt a certain virility in his body. He grabbed the bottle and started walking towards the camp. Sinhala bailā songs blared forth from the camp. He thought to himself that if the Tigers attacked at that moment, the camp would fall very easily. His feet dragged him towards the village. All the houses were submerged in darkness. On festive days like these, it was common for drunken sailors to enter the houses in the village to harass women. He knew that therefore the village folk were extra careful on such days. His mind wandered into erotic thoughts. He emptied the bottle into his mouth. The bottle was still a quarter full. He returned to the beach, put the bottle on the ground, stripped down and walked into the water until it was waist high. Then he closed his eyes and started to masturbate. After a few minutes, with weariness and disgust, he walked back to the shore and dressed himself. When he lifted the arrack bottle and opened it, he felt a heavy blow on his neck. He swirled around like an angry wounded animal. Before his brain had had time to judge the situation and act accordingly, he heard the bottle in his hand crash into the head of his assailant and break into pieces.

The next morning some sailors tied a stone to his neck and took him out to sea on a boat. The bandaged sailor who was attacked by him the previous night could not take his eyes off of Poṅrāsā. He remained quiet. They then tied him to a long rope and lowered him and the

stone into the sea. He fell into the womb of Mother Sea. He flapped his arms and legs like a baby. He felt gravel stones pressing into his belly. He could feel that his head was about to explode. A fog of darkness began to pervade his brain. Then the sailors pulled him up with the rope. He was three quarters dead when he surfaced. After this game was repeated a few times, they hauled him back into the boat. The passenger boat from Nainātīvu port to Kuṛikaṭṭuvāṇ was coming towards them at a distance. The navy maneuvered their boat abreast the passenger boat to transfer Poṅrāsā to the passenger boat. The sub commander thrust a small package into his hands. It had the two ear studs with blue gems. The commander said to Poṅrāsā in Sinhala: “Now Poṅrāsā knows what death is.”

Poṅrāsā put the ear studs into his pocket. As soon as they reached Kuṛikaṭṭuvāṇ, he hurried over to the waiting minibus. Within a couple of minutes, a voice was heard to call out “aiyā, please climb down from the bus.” Tigers were waiting outside the bus. When he got off, he was blindfolded using a piece of black cloth.

There were about two hundred prisoners in the Tiger prison. None of them knew where exactly the prison was. No one interrogated Poṅrāsā. The blue-gem ear studs were taken from him as soon as he was arrested. He was given a prison uniform. The uniform was just half a sarong. There were no other clothes. Undergarments were prohibited. His feet were bound to a chain with three iron balls. Tigers already had all the information about Poṅrāsā. The owner of the boat he stole had filed a complaint with Tigers. They also had the letter he sent to his wife from Nainātīvu. Because he had left on a boat all alone, Tigers in the prison camp called him ‘captain.’ All they asked for was just one thing: “Captain, tell us the truth.”



Ponrāsā told them everything: truths and fabrications. They listened patiently and recorded his statement on a large register. Then they asked again, “Captain, tell us the truth.” Ponrāsā was never angry when the navy beat him. But when Tigers beat him, he couldn’t control his anger. When they beat him, he closed his eyes tightly shut. His blood boiled, thinking ‘look at these weaklings, they look like number three sewing machine spindles, but dare lay their hands on a well-built body like mine.’ When he drew a map of the Naiñātīvu navy base, Tigers were truly astounded.

Staring at the map that Ponrāsā had drawn, the man-in-charge barked an order to the man standing next to him, “bring that civil engineer here.” A while later a young man whose hands and legs were in chains was dragged there on his knees, like a dog. The man-in-charge showed Ponrāsā’s map to him and said, “You call yourself a civil engineer? Look at this map Captain had drawn. Even after six months, you couldn’t draw a map of the Park Camp properly.” He then turned

to Ponrāsā and gave him a spade handle. “Captain, beat him with this. Let us see if that makes him recall what he had studied.” Ponrāsā took the spade handle without any hesitation. The first blow landed on the young man’s back. Ponrāsā growled in a loud voice as he beat the young man, “dēy, traitor. It is because of people like you that we haven’t yet gotten Tamil Eelam. These children are giving everything, including their lives, to the battle. But you betray them. Have you ever bothered to think about the hardships of the Tamil people?” The young man’s body just trembled, but he didn’t even moan in response. When Ponrāsā tried to leap over to beat the young man again, he tripped over his own foot chain and fell face first over the young man’s body. He knew absolutely nothing about the young man.

In the Tiger prison, food was served only twice a day. They added a little sugar into white rice porridge. It was barely enough to fill a quarter of one’s stomach. When they apprehended him, Ponrāsā had thought that they would beat him a couple of times while interrogating him and would then let him go. He had never expected to endure months of imprisonment, starvation, and torture. One day, when he was again asked, “Captain, tell us the truth,” his patience ran out and he told them the truth with a little harshness: “thambimār, I am like a father to you, it is wrong for you to tie me up half-naked like an animal. I gave you the map of the Naiñātīvu camp. Instead of attacking that camp, it is completely unfair that you continue to torture this old man. I have received enough beatings from the navy. Tamils should not do this to other Tamils.” The man-in-charge listened silently. Then, after deep thought, he ordered Ponrāsā to be confined in a ‘karappu’.

You have doubtless seen a karappu before – the portable chicken coop made from canes.



This karappu was a triangular-shaped barbed wire cage as tall as a grown man. They put Poṅrāsā in such a cage for three days. Apparently, the man-in-charge had grumbled, “Captain is talking politics.” One could not turn this way or the other inside that cage. If one did, the barbed wire would tear their skin.

For three days, Poṅrāsā sat inside that cage without food or sleep. If he dozed off, the barbs tore into his skin and drew blood. He suffered as though he was wearing a shirt made of thorns. In three days, his entire body had deep gashes with skin and flesh hanging. Only his head was spared. Even amidst that unbearable torture, Poṅrāsā could not help thinking that a crown of thorns would have remedied that shortcoming.

When the 1958 anti-Tamil riots happened, Poṅrāsā was exactly twenty years old. He was then working as a cook in a textile store called ‘Mariāmpillai & sons’ in a small town called

Nittambuwa in Sinhala country. He went there when he was thirteen as kitchen help but had advanced to the position of cook. The owner of the store was from Karambaṇ. He loved Poṅrāsā’s cooking. Because Poṅrāsā had the reputation of being a troublemaker, he was never paid any salary directly. Whenever the owner went home to his village, he called Poṅrāsā’s father home and handed over the entire salary arrears to him.

During those riots, ‘Mariāmpillai & sons’ was looted and burned. The owner, Mariāmpillai, was thrown alive into the bonfire. When the thugs came to grab Poṅrāsā, he lifted them as if they were rag dolls and flung them away. He then ran away to hide in the rambutān fields. The next morning when he saw military vehicles drive by, he ran to them. The army took him to a refugee camp.

When the violence subsided, he went back to his village with just the clothes on his back and the towel he was given in the refugee camp. A new bunch of youngsters from his village were getting ready to go to the south to find employment. It was when Poṅrāsā, too, was getting ready to go back to Colombo to search for a new job, that his village priest arranged for him to get a job as the cook for Father Varapragāsam at the Jaffna Big Church.

People called the Jaffna Big Church the pew church. That was the only church then that had any pews for the congregation to sit on. Hence the name. Father Varapragāsam loved Poṅrāsā’s cooking. Poṅrāsā was given a place to stay in the Father’s quarters. The priest

was born in Malaysia and had studied in Italy. His knowledge of Tamil was scant. At the Big Church, he was responsible for the Latin mass. He always spoke to Poṅrāsā in English. Poṅrāsā responded with his talent for cooking. Two years after he started working there, Poṅrāsā fell in love with Gñāṇammā who was a member of the Big Church's Legion of Mary singing troupe. When a great opposition arose in Gñāṇammā's family, Poṅrāsā absconded overnight with her to Suruvil by boat.

On the third day after they had eloped, Father Varapragāsam and Gñāṇammā's father came to Suruvil in search of them. Father Varapragāsam stood in front of Poṅrāsā's house and yelled "Cook... Cook." During the next morning service at the Big Church, crowns of thorns were placed on their heads. After that punishment, Father Varapragāsam himself performed their wedding. As a wedding gift to Gñāṇammā, the Father gave her ear studs with blue gems.

The three-day barbed wire cage punishment had completely worn Poṅrāsā down. His body kept shivering ceaselessly. It started to deteriorate rapidly. Like a dead palmyra palm tree, he was rotting on the inside. He was lying down all the time. Every time he was called for interrogation, he dragged his chain unsteadily as he walked. Nowadays, whenever he was beaten up, he cried out aloud. He desperately wanted to see his wife at least once. But he did not tell that to Tigers. He could bear the barbed wire cage. If they threw him into the bunker prison, he thought he would go completely crazy within twenty-four hours.

One evening, the leg chains of Poṅrāsā and six other prisoners were removed. They were all over fifty years old. Each was given a new sarong and shirt. Poṅrāsā thought they were about to be freed. They were blindfolded in black cloth. Overnight, the seven prisoners

were moved to a prison camp in Jaffna city.

After the rescue force evacuated the army forces trapped within Jaffna fort, the fort fell into the hands of Tigers who decided to demolish the four-hundred-year-old strong fort. A work gang from the prison camp where Poṅrāsā was being held, was taken to the fort already at six in the morning. They were given work incessantly until six in the evening. As the prisoners worked, a Tiger stood ten feet away with a cotton-wool beating rod in its hands. Prisoners were strictly forbidden to talk to one another. If a prisoner hesitated or faltered at work, he got a savage blow with the rod that singed the skin on his back. Like a mute, Poṅrāsā performed hard labor there in silence for three months, breaking stones from the fort wall, or carrying away sand and debris.

On the evening when the task of demolishing the fort was completed, Poṅrāsā was released by Tigers. "Captain, at least from now on, be loyal to Tamil Eelam," he was advised. Poṅrāsā was expecting that they would return his ear studs with blue gems. But there was no sign of their return. On hearing the word "release" Poṅrāsā had returned to his old self. He raised his voice slightly to respond to the Tiger who had offered him the advice about loyalty, "My two ear studs with blue gems are with you. Keep them as my contribution to the struggle," and left.

When she saw Poṅrāsā unexpectedly at night, Gñāṇammā was startled. The first question Poṅrāsā asked her was "did the army going to rescue the fort come to Suruvil?" When Gñāṇammā shook her head to say no, Poṅrāsā said, "That was exactly what I said back then, bitch. Your sons didn't listen to me and fled to India," and gave her a resounding slap on the cheek. The strength of the slap sent the blue-gem ear stud flying. It lay twinkling on the ground where it fell. Poṅrāsā bent down to

pick it up, asking “how did this come here?” Gñāṇammā said, “four months ago, the boys from the movement came to return them.” When Poṇrāsā went to lie down, Gñāṇammā lay next to him. She caressed his chest, put her head on it, and said “Christy and Bosco have gone to France from India. Hilda didn’t want her brothers to suffer. So she convinced her husband to call them to France within a month.”

On the eighth of May, at Muḷlivāykkāl, just prior to the last stages of the civil war, Poṇrāsā kept nagging Gñāṇammā, “we can no longer stay here, the army will reach here at any moment; let us walk over to the other side through the sea.” “No, the boys will not let the army reach here, it would be wiser to stay put,” said Gñāṇammā. “The army will do nothing to you because you are a woman, it is me they will kill,” said Poṇrāsā in a frustrated voice. He sat down on the beach sand, took Gñāṇammā’s hand, and with a shaking finger, drew a map on the sand. “There are sand fortifications here, landmines here, and Tigers are here, this is the way the army is going to break through,” he explained to Gñāṇammā. That night, when Gñāṇammā woke up startled by the sound of explosions, Poṇrāsā was not lying next to her. Gñāṇammā sat up, shaken. At around three in the morning, Poṇrāsā came back stealthily, like a cat, and sat next to Gñāṇammā. In a hushed voice, he pleaded, “there are a few boats on the beach; we can abscond to the other side in one, will you come?” “If we stayed put, we will be shot at by only one side, if you start some mischief, we may draw fire from both,” said Gñāṇammā. “If I die, you take responsibility, you whore, dāsi aparāñji,” said Poṇrāsā through gritted teeth.

Hilda, Christy, and Bosco were distraught, not having heard any news about their parents. One day there was a phone call from

Vavuṇiyā. The message was that Poṇrāsā and Gñāṇammā were being held at a detention camp in Vavuṇiyā. The very next week, Hilda left Paris for Vavuṇiyā, She threw money around all over Vavuṇiyā, secured her parents’ release, and took them to Colombo with her. Within a month, she managed to get their sponsorship for immigration to France sorted out. Hilda boarded the plane to France with them.

Hilda’s family was in Paris. Christy and Bosco had a small shop each in the town of Saint-Thibault in southern France. Christy went over to Paris to bring Poṇrāsā and Gñāṇammā back to Saint-Thibault.

Saint-Thibault is a town of rivers. Christy had a house in the middle of the quiet woods by the banks of the river Thibault. The younger son Bosco’s beautiful house was a five-minute walk away. Their shops were close to each other by the highway.

Poṇrāsā fell in love with that milieu. By the following summer, he had transformed completely. He was once again the Poṇrāsā who lifted the Sinhala thugs and flung them away. At ten in the morning, he would drink a peg of whisky and walk from Christy’s house to Bosco’s house to boss his daughter-in-law around. There, after downing another peg, he would return to Christy’s house for lunch and to boss around the other daughter-in-law. The grandchildren went absolutely quiet when they saw grandpa’s reddened eyes. Christy and Bosco were still a little afraid of their father. “Aiyā, you drink as much as you want, but refrain from making noise,” they pleaded. Gñāṇammā spent her time with the grandchildren. The children competed with one another to buy jewelry and clothing for their mother. The blue-gem ear studs from Father Varapragāsam lay abandoned in Gñāṇammā’s box.

Around midday one day, when Poṅrāsā was alone on the bank of the river Thibault, he saw that white boat. A french woman in her fifties was rowing the boat hugging the shoreline. Poṅrāsā lifted his hand in greeting. The woman, too, raised her hands to return the greeting with a smile.

The next day, at the same time, when the woman once again rowed along the riverbank, Poṅrāsā stood up and signaled her to stop the boat. When the woman stopped the boat, Poṅrāsā jumped into the river. The woman, alarmed, signaled him not to get into the water. Poṅrāsā waded through the water to the boat with a smile. When she held out a hand to help him get into the boat, Poṅrāsā nonchalantly brushed her hands away and lifted his long legs to climb over the side of the boat and topple into it. When the boat rocked violently, the woman crossed her heart and screamed. Poṅrāsā signaled her to be quiet. He touched his chest twice with his index finger and said, “captain.” The woman’s eyes widened as she broke into a smile. Her name was Agnès.

Agnès knew a hundred English words and Poṅrāsā fifty. That entire summer, they roamed around the river Thibault in that little boat. Sometimes they landed in the woods and lay down in the grass next to each other to bask in the sunlight.

Poṅrāsā called Agnès, ‘lady’ and Agnès called Poṅrāsā, ‘captain.’ Once they went to Christy’s and Bosco’s shops in Agnès’ car, He introduced her to them as his friend. One evening the following winter, on the white sheet draped over the beautiful, large Louis XV era bed in the bedroom of Agnès’ house, as Poṅrāsā lay asleep with his left arm embracing Agnès, his arm went limp, and Poṅrāsā died.

When Christy and Bosco arrived, Agnès was standing next to the bed crying. When Poṅrāsā’s body was lifted into the ambulance, Agnès ran over to hug Bosco, weeping. When Bosco patted her back to console her, Christy signaled to him with reddening eyes. Bosco did not understand that signal.

The room in the hospital where Poṅrāsā was kept was opened every day at nine in the morning and closed at eleven. Every day, Gñāṇammā and the children went there to sit by the room. Hilda fainted often. Christy and Bosco never told their sister or mother where Poṅrāsā was found dead. They just told them that he had a heart attack while lying down by the river. The brothers were relieved that Agnès did not show up at the hospital.

At midday on the day before the burial, everyone had gathered at Christy’s house chatting. Their relatives and friends from Paris would arrive for the funeral that evening and the next morning. They were discussing arrangements for housing and feeding the visitors. They expected no less than a hundred people for the burial. The front doorbell rang. When the door was opened, Agnès stood there with a small parcel. She had covered her head with a veil and stood there shivering. Bosco invited her in. She did not say much. She gave the parcel to Bosco and said, “if you can install this on Mr. Poṅrāsā’s grave, I would be fortunate,” and left. When Bosco looked through the window, she was walking through the frozen snow towards the banks of the river Thibault.

Bosco carefully opened the parcel Agnès had given him. It was a small square slab of black marble intended to be installed on a grave. On it a picture of a boat’s helm was embossed in gold, with an anchor in the middle. Installing such a marble insignia in the graves of ship captains is a French tradition.



Christy got up slowly, walked towards Bosco, took the marble slab from his hand, and slammed it on the floor. “If we install this on the grave, then people looking at this will think that we belong to the fisher folk caste,” he yelled. He kicked the marble slab which had broken into two. Hilda ran to her brother in anguish and held his hands. “Just leave it if you don’t like it, why are you getting so angry?” she asked in consternation. He pushed Hilda away violently and leapt towards the door. The force with which he slammed the door made the windows reverberate.

Little shrubs and grass grow on that grave that stands between the grave of a firefighter and the grave of a Chinese shopkeeper. There is no sign of who the grave belongs to.

The next summer, a woman was rowing alone in a small white boat along river Thibault. When sunlight fell on her face, the blue-gem ear studs in her ears glittered.

**End**



# 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.

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

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