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# Jaffna monitor

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UNAFRAID AND UNBOWED

Proposals for a Common Tamil Candidate:  
**The Tamil Parties' Tug of War**

**Disturbing the Readers' Peace is  
the Essence of Good Art**

Exclusive Interview with **Shobasakthi**

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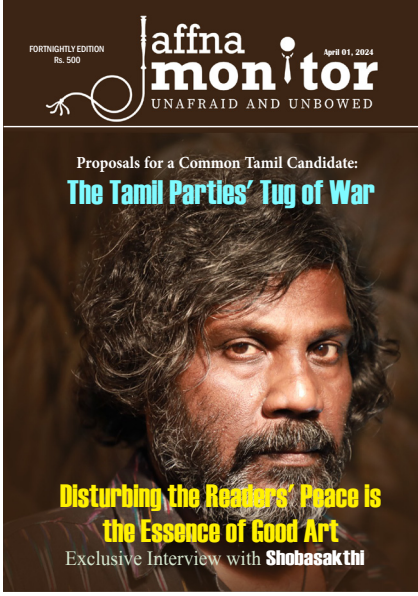
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# Jaffna Monitor's New Focus on Local Vibrancy and Literary Depth

Greetings,

In this issue, Jaffna Monitor, embarks on an exciting new journey, diverging from our traditional offerings to place a deeper focus on the local heartbeat and intellectual vibrancy of our community.

Our editorial board has collectively decided to halt the publication of our series temporarily - Anton Master Speaks, Mahathaya's Saga- and the interview with Karuna, the former LTTE military commander of the Eastern Province. This pause, though significant, reflects our unwavering commitment to bringing diverse narratives to the forefront. Rest assured, these popular series will return in our upcoming issues.

This edition showcases the exemplary talents of our dedicated reporting team. Their work goes beyond mere reporting; it captures the very essence of our community's spirit and dynamism. As the editor, their exceptional efforts fill me with immense pride.

In this issue, we are proud to present a distinguished feature: a compelling interview with Shobasakthi, the acclaimed writer and actor. Although our dialogue was concise owing to his commitments at the Paris Literary meeting, it offered a revealing glimpse into his extraordinary literary acumen. It's important to note that while we have some concerns about the organizational approach and authoritarian tendencies of certain members of

the literary meeting, these issues do not overshadow his substantial and influential contributions to the world of literature.

We also present a riveting piece by Dr. Aravinthan Arunthavananathan, an esteemed sports writer. His article, "The Inside Story of the 1996 India-Sri Lanka Semi-final," is more than a mere retelling of a historic cricket match. It delves deep into the spirit of a sport that bridges nations and unites hearts.

Adding to the richness of this edition is "Oru Cīruvaṇṇi Katai" (ஒரு சிறுவனின் கதை) by the revered Sri Lankan Tamil writer A. Mutulingam, elegantly translated by Eluttukkūṇṇiyavaṇ. This story not only offers literary excellence but connects us with our cultural roots and heritage.

We value your opinions on this new direction and invite you to share your thoughts. Your feedback is instrumental in shaping the Jaffna Monitor's future. Please feel free to contact us at [hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com](mailto:hellojaffnamonitor@gmail.com) or through WhatsApp and direct call at +94715418220.

Let us continue this journey of exploration, discovery, and storytelling together.

Warm regards,

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

Proposals for a Common Tamil Candidate:

# The Tamil Parties' Tug of War



■  
By:  
**Our Reporter**

Discussions about the upcoming presidential election have begun in the Tamil political arena. One of the first to express an opinion on the presidential election was Suresh Premachandran, Secretary of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation

Front (EPRLF) and a leader of the Democratic Tamil National Alliance (DTNA). He had suggested, months earlier, that a common Tamil candidate should be nominated for the presidential election. Following his proposal, the DTNA announced at a meeting in Mannar their intention to nominate a common Tamil candidate.

Additionally, Jaffna district parliamentarian and Tamil People's National Alliance (TPNA)

Leader C.V. Vigneswaran has also expressed support for this idea. True to his self-aggrandizing nature, he went a step further by declaring his readiness to be the common Tamil candidate in the presidential election.

The Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), consistent with its unconventional functioning style, has announced that it will not participate in any form of the presidential election. Furthermore, the leaders of the TNPF even scoffed at the idea of appointing a common candidate.

Up to this point, the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), which is embroiled in a legal battle over its party leadership, has not clearly articulated its stance. As ITAK's leaders were preoccupied with internal ego clashes and ongoing political battles in court.

Against this backdrop, a symposium named 'People's Petition' was recently held in Jaffna, focusing on discussions about nominating a common Tamil candidate for the presidential election. Sritharan, the leader recently elected by the ITAK in their internal election, also attended. The majority of political leaders at the symposium voiced their support for a common Tamil candidate.

However, Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, a Batticaloa district Member of Parliament and a prominent figure in the Sumanthiran faction of ITAK, has expressed opposition to the idea of a common Tamil candidate for the presidential election.

Political observers note that enthusiasm for a common Tamil candidate might diminish if the ITAK does not lend its support. Therefore, they have pointed out that the success of the initiative to nominate a common Tamil candidate largely hinges on ITAK's decision.

Currently embroiled in a leadership contest and internal conflicts, the Tamil Arasu Katchi appears incapable of making a collective decision. As long as their legal issues remain unresolved, political observers suggest that their ability to make a unified choice seems unlikely.

It is clear that even if the parties unite to nominate a common presidential candidate for the Sri Lankan Tamils, it will not be significantly effective considering the demographic disparity between the Tamil and Sinhala populations in Sri Lanka. Due to this disparity, The Tamil community cannot realistically secure a win in a presidential election.

However, as some optimists believe, nominating a common Tamil candidate could symbolize a show of unity and solidarity among Tamils in the electoral process. Yet, this symbolic gesture might not have a significant impact on the actual outcome of the election. It may also not encourage active participation from Tamil parties and their supporters, given the improbability of winning the presidency under these circumstances.

In this scenario, a few political observers believe that Tamil parties intending to support a Sinhala candidate likely to win the presidential election could play a pivotal role. They argue that such support places these parties in a strategic position for negotiation with the presidential candidate, potentially providing them with leverage and influence in the decision-making process. These observers also contend that while nominating a common Tamil candidate for the Sri Lankan presidential election might hold symbolic significance, such a move is unlikely to affect the actual outcome of the election and risks being perceived as a futile gesture.

INTERVIEW

# Disturbing the Readers' Peace is the Essence of Good Art

Exclusive Interview  
with **Shobasakthi**



BY:

## Our Special Correspondent

Shobasakthi, an eminent Sri Lankan Tamil author, is renowned for his exceptional narrative skills, endowing his prose with a vivid and dynamic vitality. His Novels, especially 'Gorilla', 'M', 'BOX: A Story Book', and 'Ichaa', have achieved significant acclaim within the Tamil diaspora and have been translated into multiple languages. In addition to his prowess in novel writing, Shobasakthi exhibits a remarkable adeptness in crafting short stories and essays, further demonstrating his versatile literary competence.

Shobashakthi's artistic journey took a notable turn in 2015 when he expanded his horizons from the literary world to cinema, showcasing his acting skills in the French film 'Dheepan'. In this movie, he portrayed the role of a Sri Lankan refugee. This performance contributed to the film's triumph in securing the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, thus accentuating his multifaceted artistic talent. Having embarked on his literary career with the publication of his inaugural short story in 1997, Shobashakthi has since charted a deep and enduring course in the sphere of literature, continuously infusing it with his distinctive insights and stylistic eloquence.

Shobashakthi's literary oeuvre deeply explores the experiences of Sri Lankan Tamils, blending acute observations with a mixture of wit and political satire. His unique approach in addressing complex issues, combined with his bold criticism of entrenched beliefs and dominant opinions, whether it concerns the caste system or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has attracted a wide-ranging



readership. His audience includes numerous admirers who praise his work, as well as others who vehemently denounce him and his writings.

The saying, "You can love him or hate him, but you definitely can't ignore him," aptly encapsulates the impact of Shobashakthi on Eelam Tamil literature. Despite the diverse opinions surrounding his work, Shobashakthi's influence is undeniable. His contributions have become an essential element of its history, profoundly enriching and significantly shaping the narrative of Eelam Tamil literature.

We recently had the privilege of sitting down with the maverick writer Shobasakthi for an exclusive interview with Jaffna Monitor. Here are the excerpts from our conversation.

**How did Antonyhasan Jesuthasan become known as Shobaskathi?  
Many people have theorized about**

## **this, but I would like to hear it in your own words.**

As you know, I am very passionate about acting. During my teenage years, I was deeply captivated by the acting skills of South Indian film actress Shoba. Her performances in movies like 'Pasi', 'Moodupani', and 'Azhiaatha Kolangal' were particularly enchanting to me. The first part of my pseudonym is a tribute to her name. The second part, 'Sakthi', was inspired by the poem 'Solladi Sivasakthi' by the esteemed poet Subramania Bharathi, which resonated strongly with me.

## **Despite the LTTE's significant influence and Prabhakaran's adulation during a crucial period for Sri Lankan Tamils, you remained critical, especially of their violent tactics. How did you foresee their eventual downfall at Mullivaikal when they were at their peak?**

There are several reasons. Due to the fascist actions of the Tigers, they became alienated from the people. Especially after the 1990s, they completely abandoned the qualities of a liberation movement, and Prabhakaran turned into merely a warlord.

The Tigers desired war until the end. People, weary from the war, did not want it. If the people had desired war, the Tigers would not have had to engage in forced conscription, nor would there have been a need to implement a pass system to prevent people from leaving the northern areas.

The conflict with the Indian Army, culminating in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, were key military factors that led to the downfall of the Tigers. After the 2001 Twin Towers attack in

America and the changing global situation, I believed that these would accelerate the demise of the Tigers. The separation of Eastern Province fighters from the mainland LTTE also militarily weakened the Tigers. These various reasons were the basis for my prediction of the Tigers' downfall.

## **Following the 1983 ethnic riots, numerous militant groups emerged, a theme you explore in your short story 'The F group'. Amidst the formation of these various movements, what led you to choose the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)? Weren't the Tigers fascists at that time? Or did you not have the life experience to recognize that fascism? Or did you join the Tigers due to a compulsion to be part of some movement?**

The ethnic cleansing and oppressive tactics unleashed by the Sri Lankan chauvinistic government against the Tamil people were what spurred me to join the struggle for the liberation of Tamil Eelam. Among the movements that fought for Tamil Eelam's liberation, the Tigers' was actively and extensively involved in armed struggle, which led me to join them. I was 16 when I joined the Tigers and 19 when I left. At that age, I did not have the political understanding to realize the movement's true nature.

## **Why did you leave the Tigers organization? While you were a member, wasn't it necessary to take responsibility for the organization's fascist actions based on the concept of 'collective consciousness'?**



The primary reason for leaving the Tigers organization was the tyrannical environment within the organization. Power was concentrated in the leadership, and we, as fighters, were led like flocks of sheep. I definitely accept responsibility for the mistakes made by the movement during the time I was active in it, based on collective conscience.

**In an interview, you mentioned, "I was not merely an observer of the war; I actively participated in its unfolding. I persuaded my friends to join the movement, only to see them perish." How will you escape the guilt of this?**

I cannot escape that guilt until my death.

**You've said in an interview that facing trouble for your writing is an intimidation against a writer, not oppression against a fighter. You've moved past seeing yourself as a fighter, considering it an insult to true fighters. Yet, you've often identified as a child soldier, haven't you?**

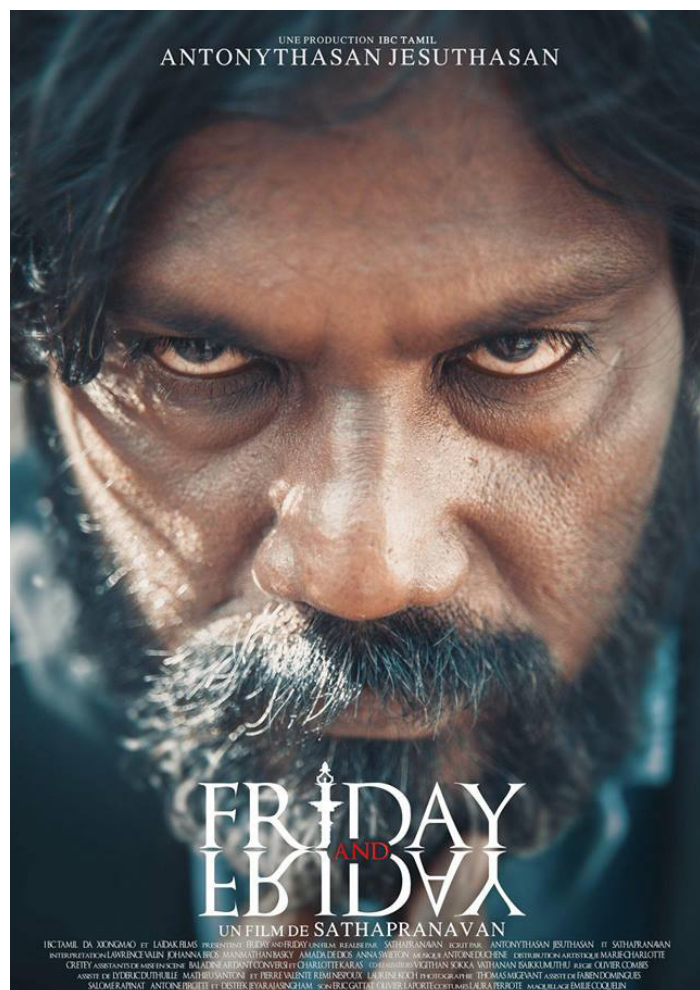
In that interview, I said, 'I am not a fighter now.' This does not mean

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to hide the fact that I was a fighter in the LTTE in the past. In the early days of my writing, I had the notion of being a left-wing fighter. This belief was strengthened when I worked with the Trotskyist organization 'Fourth International' after coming to France. However, in recent times, I haven't been involved in any organizational work. I haven't found a political organization that aligns with my beliefs. Therefore, I focus only on my art and writing. So, I am not a fighter now.

**You've said, 'I don't oppose a nonexistent LTTE. I've moved on and now mock rather than seriously engage with those carrying the Tigers' ideology.' But considering the Tigers' ideology still exists, isn't it important to question its origins?**



*Movie poster of Shobasakthi's 'Friday And Friday'*

I believe that the basic ideology of the Tigers has been completely abandoned by their political supporters now. Nobody is putting forward the demand for an independent country anymore. This doesn't mean they have shifted to progressive politics; rather, they are involved in a different kind of worse politics. The Canadian Tamil Congress is an excellent example of this.

**You are well-known for your strong critique of the caste system among Sri Lankan Tamils. In your view, what is the actual state of the caste dynamics in the regions inhabited by Sri Lankan Tamils?**

The direct oppression and caste discrimination experienced by Sri Lankan Tamils during the 1960s and 70s have decreased, but they have not disappeared. The movement against untouchability significantly broke down the barriers of the caste system. The armed struggle has created a rupture in the caste structure and in the political and social contributions of women.

However, casteism, as a cultural and customary practice, is still deeply entrenched in the psyche of the dominant castes. Direct untouchability and caste-based discrimination remain widespread. Moreover, these practices are still prevalent there. In educational institutions, religious organizations, media, and alums associations, the mindset of the dominant caste and the ostracization of Dalits continue to occur. This has even spread to the diaspora also.

**Some staunch Tamil nationalists claim that there is no casteism in the Tamil-inhabited areas of Sri Lanka now and that stories about**



**casteism are unnecessary. What's your view on this? Do you think casteism and Tamil nationalism are intertwined?**

I don't think that casteism and Tamil nationalism are intertwined in an ideological sense. Before our times, Dravidian movement leaders in Tamil Nadu, who once advocated for an independent state while emphasizing Tamil nationalism, were also intensely involved in the abolition of caste. Periyar E.V. Ramasamy argued that the demand for an independent state was primarily based on Brahmin dominance in the central government.

I believe that casteism is intricately linked with Hinduism, a view also shared by Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who, after extensively studying

the caste system, proclaimed, "I will not die a Hindu," and embarrassed Buddhism.

Our national liberation movements have indeed been indifferent to caste eradication. They opportunistically thought that emphasizing the abolition of the caste system would detract from their national liberation struggle. However, no national liberation movement was built on caste foundations.

However, strong caste currents within electoral parties like the Tamil United Liberation Front and the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi were evident.

At the same time, these caste inequalities were also present among electoral parties other than Tamil nationalist parties. Even the Communist parties cannot escape this accusation. In the



northern region, despite the Communist Party receiving significant support from Dalit communities, there has been criticism that no Dalit has ever been able to ascend to a leadership position within the party.

**You've criticized foreign Tiger branches and pro-Tiger Indian politicians for not properly commemorating Prabhakaran. Now, Prabhakaran's elder brother, Manoharan, has announced that he will organize a commemoration event for his brother's family, including Prabhakaran. What are your thoughts on this?**

There's a need for the foreign branches of the Tigers to maintain the illusion that Prabhakaran is still alive. This is how they can keep control of the Tigers' assets, enjoy the taste of power, and collect money from the people in the name of Prabhakaran.

I think Prabhakaran's brother Manoharan doesn't have these needs. To him, Prabhakaran is not a leader but a younger brother, and theirs is a family of religious faith. Therefore, they engage sincerely in rituals like memorial services.

**Why is there so much violence in your stories?**

I have personally witnessed, experienced, and overcome such extreme violence. Portraying violence in stories depends on the choice of the narrative tool.

At the same time, depicting violence in my stories is essentially about portraying the perpetrators of violence, exposing them. When

you read about violence in my stories, you despise the aggressors, don't you? You develop an intense dislike for violence itself, don't you? That's exactly what I aim for.

**The violent and sadistic aspects of some characters in your stories may seem excessive to the point of discomfort for some readers, leading them to disengage from your writing. This has created a general perception that the writings of Shobashakthi are characterized by such violence. I'm aware of readers who have chosen not to read Shoba Shakthi for this reason. Isn't losing readers a concern for you?**

Losing readers is certainly a concern. But what worries me more is hiding the truth in my writing. I don't aim to comfort my readers with my writing. I believe disturbing the readers' peace is the essence of good art.

Tolstoy's words, 'Peace is the lowliest state of the soul,' are sacred to me.

**I would consider you as a Sri Lankan writer who has captivated Indian readers in this generation. How was this alchemy achieved? Also, how do you view the accusation that you write specifically for Indian readers?**

Good literature knows no national boundaries. We intensely read the works of Indian, French, and Russian writers, don't we? Similarly, Indian readers read good literature from our region.

There's no alchemy here. Tamil Nadu readers have celebrated many Sri Lankan Tamil writers before me, like S. Ponnudurai, K Daniel, Mu. Thalayasingam, Piramil, and A. Muthulingam.

The accusation that I write solely for Indian readers is baseless. That would be nothing more than parochial literary narrow-mindedness, akin to running a horse inside a pot. Don't my writings appeal to and are read by Eelam Tamils? I write for an international audience. My stories reach readers in multiple languages including Malayalam, French, English, Dutch, and Sinhalese. I am in an ongoing conversation with them.

**What are your next literary and artistic endeavours?**

My upcoming literary endeavours include acting in the play 'Counting and Cracking,' which will be performed in Melbourne in June, Sydney in July, and New York in September. This play, set between 1956 and 2004, revolves around the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and involves Tamil, Sinhalese, and Burgher actors. I'm also scheduled to act in a movie by the end of this year. As usual, I'm continuing to write short stories and am planning my sixth novel.

My novel 'Salam Alaik' is going to be published in French and 'Box' in English. I'm collaborating with publishers on the final stages of these books.

"As part of the organizing committee for a literary meeting in Paris tomorrow, my commitments beckon, and we must draw this interview to a close. Let's look forward to delving deeper in our next conversation, comrade," Shobasakthi concluded, signalling an end to this captivating interview session.

# Sri Lanka's 3x3 Basketball: A Cinderella Story at the FIBA Asia Cup

■  
By:  
Our Reporter

In a stunning showcase of skill and teamwork, Sri Lanka's basketball team, featuring the remarkable talent of Jaffna's own Simron Yoganathan, clinched a monumental victory in the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup held in

Singapore. This victory, achieved against the formidable Korean team known for their dominance in the sport, marked a significant milestone for the island nation in international Basketball.

The youthful Sri Lankan team, considered clear underdogs in the matchup, faced a formidable and taller Korean side known for their regional





*Simron Yoganathan*

strength. Despite the Korean team's height advantage and swift, commanding start, the Sri Lankan players showcased exceptional skill and resilience. Their strategic play and unwavering determination led to a notable victory in this highly competitive international tournament.

Despite facing a formidable opponent, the Sri Lankan team maintained their composure, displaying relentless drive and precision in their shooting and offensive manoeuvres. Their effective execution at the free-throw line played a crucial role in turning the tide of the game.

# What is 3x3 Basketball?

3x3 Basketball, often written as 3x3 or three-on-three, is an innovative and exciting variant of traditional Basketball. This format offers a more dynamic and fast-paced gameplay experience, primarily due to its reduced team size and playing area. Here are some of the key characteristics and differences from the standard basketball game:

**Team Composition:** In 3x3 Basketball, each team is comprised of three players on the court, a significant reduction from the standard five in traditional Basketball. This smaller team size leads to a game that's faster and more personal, as players often find themselves in direct competition with their opponents.

**Playing Field:** The game is played on a half-court, with one hoop instead of two. This setup is reminiscent of street basketball and enhances the pace and intensity of the game. The smaller court demands quick transitions between offence and defence, putting players' versatility to the test.

**Scoring System:** Scoring in 3x3 Basketball differs slightly from the traditional game. A shot made from inside the three-point arc (the same as the two-point line in standard Basketball) is worth two points, and a shot from outside the

In a pivotal moment, with time running out, Pawan Gamage's dynamic penetration towards the basket forced the Korean defence to buckle. Demonstrating astute awareness, Gamage cleverly passed the ball to Dasun Nilantha, who executed a flawless jump shot from the short corner, clinching a hard-earned 21-19 victory for Sri Lanka. This strategic play marked the most significant upset of the tournament, showcasing the team's tactical acumen and fighting spirit.

Until the time of this news report, Sri Lanka had remained unbeaten in the competition, winning all three of their games. Their first win was against another strong side, Indonesia, with a score of 21-14. The game against Mongolia was scheduled for April 29 at 12:10 pm Sri Lanka time, while the fixture against Thailand was set for 6:05 pm. The national team has made significant progress in the sport's condensed format over the years.

The 3x3 arm of Sri Lankan basketball is a well-organized unit with regular events. Sports analysts say that international exposure could help the team reach new heights. The Sri Lankan 3x3 team represents several parts of the country, showcasing the widespread talent nationwide.

While Rukshan Atapattu and Pawan Gamage are from Colombo, Simron Yoganathan hails from Jaffna, and Dasun Nilantha is from Ambalangoda. Atapattu is an undergraduate at the University of Moratuwa, Gamage serves in the Sri Lanka Army, Yoganathan works at Commercial Credit, and the Ministry of Education employs Dasun. Tharindu Fernando is the coach of the team.

arc is worth one point. This scoring system adds an extra tactical dimension to the game.

**Duration and Game Format:** A typical 3x3 game lasts for 10 minutes or until a team scores 21 points, whichever comes first. This shorter duration makes each game a high-energy and high-stakes affair. If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, the game goes into overtime, where the first team to score two points wins.

**Ball Size:** The ball used in 3x3 Basketball is slightly smaller and lighter than a standard basketball, tailored to the game's unique style and faster pace.

**Global Recognition and Competitions:** 3x3 Basketball has gained significant recognition worldwide. It's governed by FIBA, the international basketball federation, and made its Olympic debut in the Tokyo 2020 Games. This exposure has helped it grow rapidly in popularity, both at the amateur and professional levels.

**Accessibility:** One of the appealing aspects of 3x3 Basketball is its accessibility. It requires fewer players, making it easier to organize games. The smaller court size also means that it can be played in more varied and smaller spaces, making it a popular urban sport.

**Skills and Strategy:** In 3x3 Basketball, players must be skilled in various aspects of the game. The rapid pace and constant action require excellent ball handling, shooting, and defensive skills, as well as a high level of physical fitness.



# Unity in Realism: Siddharthan's Push for the 13th Amendment

■  
By:  
Our Reporter



*T. Siddharthan*

In an address at the 11th National Convention of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) in Vavuniya, T. Siddharthan, leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Member of Parliament for Jaffna District, stressed the crucial need for a unified stance on the 13th Amendment. "The 13th Amendment, birthed from the India-Sri Lanka Accord, stands firm," he declared. "It's not a perfect solution, but it's essential that we come together in accepting it. Despite the opposition from many quarters."

Siddharthan then turned his attention to a troubling trend: the dwindling numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils in the North and East, a situation exacerbated by the increased ease of obtaining visas to countries like Canada and the UK. He pointed out that this year alone, approximately 20,000 individuals have left Sri Lanka from these areas. In light of this exodus, he argued, embracing the 13th Amendment is not just a strategic move but a necessary one.

"Our focus must be on consolidating what we have and revitalizing the North and East. This approach is practical, not ideal. Our goal should always be to strive for the ideal while firmly grasping the realities at hand," he urged, countering the often unrealistic narratives spun by Tamil nationalist parties.

# Nurturing the Future:

# Sri Lanka Embraces Tamil Nadu's Legacy in School Meal Programs



■  
By:  
**Our Reporter**

Sri Lanka's recent implementation of a school meal program, inspired by the pioneering efforts of Tamil Nadu, marks a significant advancement in educational and nutritional support for children. This initiative, launched in 2024 on March 25th, is poised to benefit 1.6 million students in grades 1 to 5, offering free breakfast at 9,134 government schools. The aim is to address nutritional deficiencies,

enhance school attendance, promote healthy eating habits, and elevate academic performance while also celebrating local culinary traditions.

The origins of such school meal programs trace back to Tamil Nadu, India, a trailblazer in this realm. The Corporation of Madras, in 1925-26, launched a school lunch program as an immediate measure to combat malnutrition and avitaminosis



*Former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Kamaraj serving food to school children under the Mid-Day Meal Program.*



*Former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran also serving food to school children, continuing the legacy.*

among children from economically disadvantaged families. This innovative scheme was designed as an incentive to improve school attendance for children from families earning less than Rs—50 per month at the time.

Subsequently, Tamil Nadu saw a surge in voluntary and philanthropic efforts to establish free school lunch centers throughout the state. The school lunch program was reinvigorated in July 1956 as a "people's movement, by then chief minister k.kamarajar.

The government formally adopted and refined this program in November 1957, encouraging public and parental

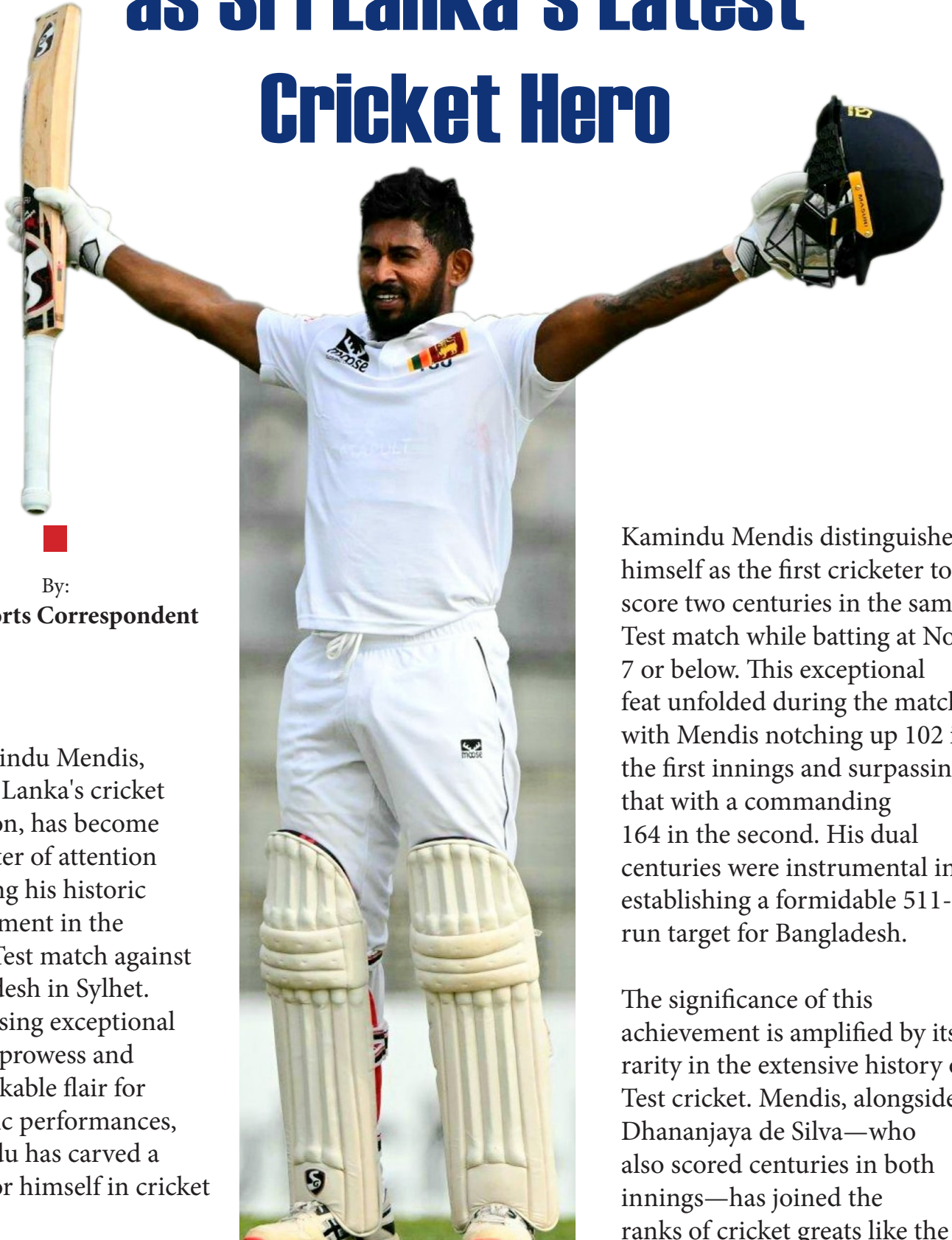
participation.

In 1955, during a teachers' conference in Chennai, then Chief Minister Kamaraj discussed the concept of providing free lunch to poor children in primary schools. Following debates and overcoming initial scepticism, the program was launched in Ettayapuram, the birthplace of the Tamil poet Bharathiar. Kamaraj famously stated, "Feeding at school is not new to us. We have been offering food to guests at home; now we seek to go to schools to provide food. This combines the merits of saving lives and providing education, and there is no task more important to me. Hence, I am prepared to set aside all other duties and actively participate in this lunch program."

Under subsequent leaders like M.G. Ramachandran and during DMK's rule, the program expanded, introducing eggs and other nutritious elements into the school meals.

It's heartening to see Sri Lanka embark on a journey that has seen widespread success in Tamil Nadu. The adage "You can't educate a hungry child" rings particularly true in this context, highlighting the importance of this initiative.

# Overlooked Kamindu Mendis Rises as Sri Lanka's Latest Cricket Hero



By:

**Our Sports Correspondent**

**K**amindu Mendis, Sri Lanka's cricket sensation, has become the center of attention following his historic achievement in the recent Test match against Bangladesh in Sylhet. Showcasing exceptional batting prowess and a remarkable flair for dramatic performances, Kamindu has carved a niche for himself in cricket history.

Kamindu Mendis distinguished himself as the first cricketer to score two centuries in the same Test match while batting at No. 7 or below. This exceptional feat unfolded during the match, with Mendis notching up 102 in the first innings and surpassing that with a commanding 164 in the second. His dual centuries were instrumental in establishing a formidable 511-run target for Bangladesh.

The significance of this achievement is amplified by its rarity in the extensive history of Test cricket. Mendis, alongside Dhananjaya de Silva—who also scored centuries in both innings—has joined the ranks of cricket greats like the



*Kamindu Mendis displaying his unique ambidextrous bowling skills, bowling with both left and right hands*

Chappell brothers (Greg and Ian) of Australia and Pakistan's Misbah-ul-Haq and Azhar Ali. This milestone not only highlights Mendis's individual brilliance but also signifies his increasing significance in the Sri Lankan team.

Mendis's recent successes are the result of a journey characterized by immense talent and resilience. Initially overlooked by selectors and confined to a limited number of international matches, Mendis consistently demonstrated his calibre. His capacity to perform under pressure and his distinct skill set make him an indispensable member of the Sri Lankan squad.

In addition to his impressive batting skills, Mendis is also known for his unique ambidextrous bowling ability in cricket. Naturally a left-hander, he is adept at delivering both right and left-arm bowls.

This rare capability makes him a dual threat on the field, comfortable and skilled in using both hands for batting and bowling. His ambidexterity adds a layer of versatility, making him a formidable player in any format of the game.

Even in its early phases, Mendis's career has shown remarkable promise. His stellar performance against Bangladesh rapidly elevates his status to that of an internationally acclaimed cricketer. His journey thus far showcases not just his personal talent but also mirrors the changing dynamics of contemporary cricket, where players who possess versatility and adaptability are highly prized. Mendis's rise from being an under-recognized talent to achieving historic milestones in the sport is a testament to his perseverance, skill, and the true spirit of cricket.

## ITAK's Internal Strife:

# The Battle Over 'Puthiya Suthanthiran'



■  
By:  
Our Reporter

The Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK) is currently embroiled in a court-based leadership struggle and is facing new internal conflicts. The source of this turmoil is the party's ambitious newspaper venture, 'Puthiya Suthanthiran.' Initially meant to be ITAK's mouthpiece, its launch was a moment to highlight the party's voice and vision. However, the situation soon took an unexpected turn.

The individual who registered the newspaper, originally just a custodian, has now claimed ownership and

exerted significant personal influence, catching ITAK off guard. Internal sources within ITAK firmly believe that Mavai Senathiraja, the former leader of the party, is orchestrating these developments.

The history of the newspaper dates back to 1947, representing the party's enduring legacy. Following the death of 'Thanthai' Selva, ITAK's founder, the control of the original 'Suthanthiran' newspaper shifted from the party to Selva's heirs. To resurrect this legacy, Mavai Senathiraja, leading the party in 2018, relaunched 'Puthiya Suthanthiran.' It was registered in the name of a trusted associate of Mavai, backed by fundraising and party enthusiasm.

Promises to re-register the newspaper under Mavai's name, made during election times, eventually fell by the wayside. The situation intensified in 2020 when the publication suddenly ceased, only to resurface in February this year as a digital platform. The trusted individual evolved into a rogue publisher, portraying the revival of the newspaper as a personal achievement and distancing it from ITAK.

This development sparked heated debates within ITAK's political committee. While Mavai distanced himself from the current version of the newspaper, other notable members like Sumanthiran and Shritharan spoke out against its unauthorized publication. Dr. P. Sathiyalingam, the acting general secretary of ITAK, demanded an immediate cessation of 'Puthiya Suthanthiran,' yet the publication continued.

During a recent party meeting, the leadership expressed their concerns about the newspaper being published without their approval. They concurred that the party should take measures to halt its unauthorized publication. Despite this, the newspaper is still being published contrary to their wishes.

This circumstance has led to considerable perplexity among the party's supporters and international financiers,

prompting deliberations about future courses of action. While Mavai Senathiraja officially disassociated himself from the current publication activities during the political committee assembly, internal informants within ITAK harbor strong suspicions about his covert involvement. This suspicion resonates with his known reputation for cunning and strategic maneuvers, as characterized by party insiders.



An early issue of ITAK's mouthpiece 'Suthanthiran'.

# Jaffna Jolt: The Mysterious Case of Arun Siddharth's UNP Appointment



By:  
Our Reporter

In a twist that could rival a political thriller, the appointment of Arun Siddharth (alias Arulanantham Arun) as the United National Party (UNP) organizer for the Jaffna District has turned from a celebratory announcement into a bewildering conundrum.

Initially, in a scene brimming with pomp and circumstance at a wedding hall in Jaffna, Ravi Karunanayake, the UNP's assistant leader and a major political heavyweight, heralded Arun's appointment. This move wasn't just a mere political decision but a statement reflecting Karunanayake's influential standing and Arun's escalating manoeuvres in the political arena.

The venue was electrified by the cheers of hundreds of Arun's supporters. That evening, Arun took to Facebook with a bold declaration: 'The Era of Oppressed People Turning into Leaders Begins.' Arun, hailing from an oppressed caste in Jaffna, unapologetically embraced his caste identity as a badge of honour, in stark contrast to other leaders from oppressed castes, who shied away



*Arun Siddharth*

from theirs due to the social stigma associated with it.

But just when it seemed the political stars were aligning for Arun, the plot thickened. In a staggering volte-face, President Ranil Wickremesinghe, also the head honcho of the UNP, who was on a one-day visit to Jaffna, denied the appointment during a meeting with local Jaffna UNP functionaries. This abrupt U-turn sparked a wildfire of speculation. Had the political winds shifted overnight?

The behind-the-scenes machinations during



those few days remain shrouded in mystery. Rumours of internal party turbulence and dissent abound – was this the reason for the sudden public disparity? Moreover, Arun, often criticized by ultra-Tamil nationalists as a supposed ally of military intelligence – a claim he refutes – found himself in an even tighter spot. With these denials, the narrative around Arun Siddharth's role in the party has become as clear as a foggy day in Jaffna.



*Arun Siddharth alongside Ravi Karunanayake, the UNP's Assistant Leader, during the event proclaiming Arun as the United National Party (UNP) Organizer for the Jaffna District.*

As the saga unfolds, the political scene resembles a chessboard with pieces in disarray. With the UNP's upper echelons sending mixed signals, members and spectators are left scratching their heads. Is Arun Siddharth really the anointed organizer for the Jaffna District, or was the announcement as ill-timed as a monsoon wedding?

This episode, as viewed through the discerning eyes of political observers, unveils the labyrinthine maze of the UNP's internal politics, illustrating vividly a party often ensnared in its own tantalizing web of political manoeuvring and internal power plays.

But Arun seems unfazed. He wrote a Facebook post in Tamil, sharing newspaper articles and Facebook posts that criticized his appointment. His post was titled 'அச்சத்தின் மறுபக்கமே வெறுப்பு ஆகும்' (The Other Side of Fear is Hatred), which can be loosely translated as follows:

*The seeds of the desert land possess a hundredfold strength because behind each seed*

*lies the sorrow of countless seeds that perished, longing for life yet unable to find water. There's the eagerness of thousands of seeds that have meditated for just a drop of water.*

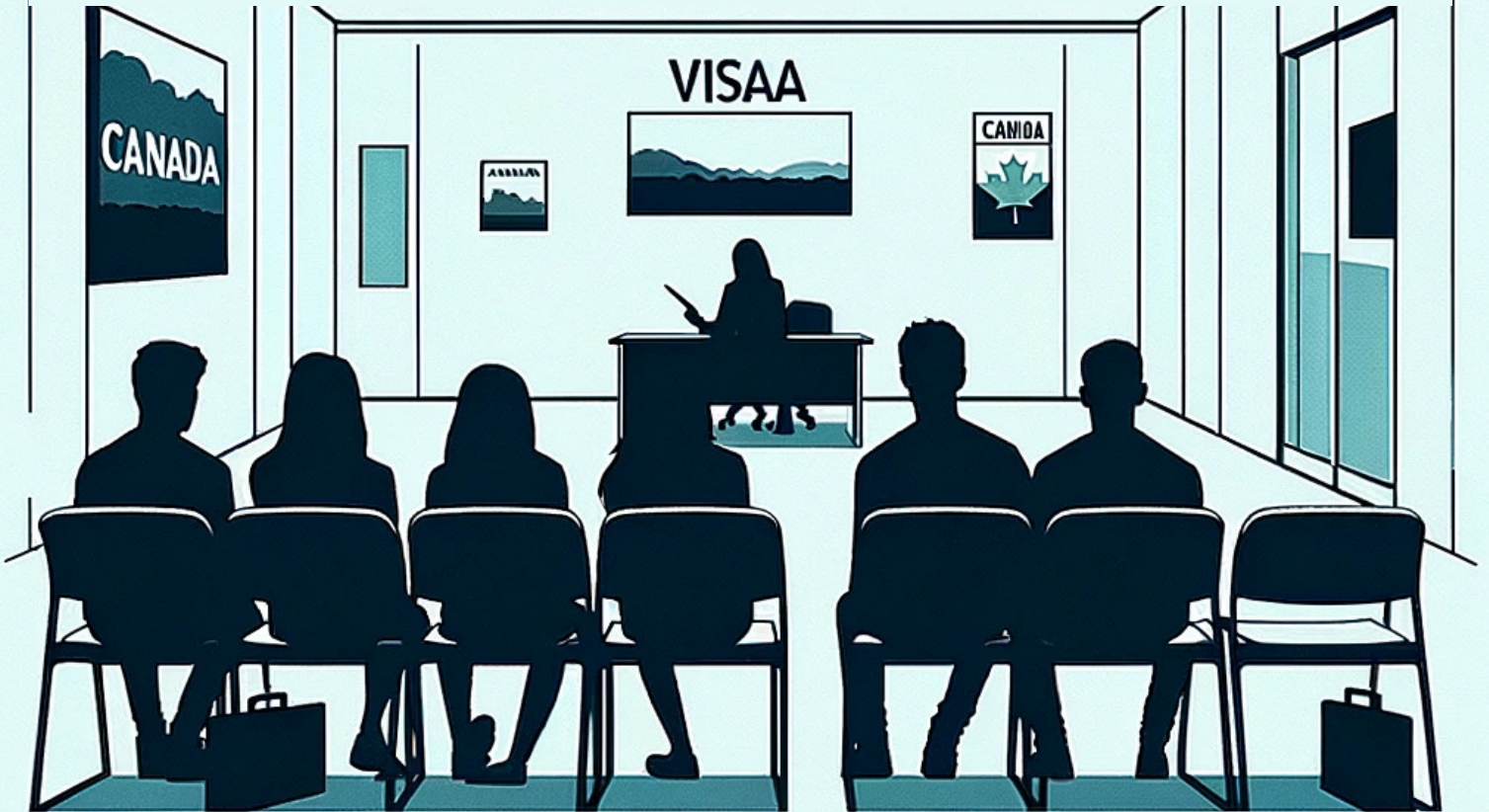
*I have risen from the tears of the oppressed, chased from land to land for centuries. Isn't my success evident in the fact that everyone here is sizing me up? I can already see the smiles that will bloom in the hearts of many when I lose in the field. Isn't it delightful that they all await my failure? But that's not going to happen. Those with a single goal are destined to succeed.*

*The other side of fear is hatred. Power is always hated by those who are weaker. But what is truly powerful naturally becomes a ruler. No one needs to make it so.*

*The obstacles invigorate the mind of the strategist. It proclaims, 'Here is my arena!' and longs for more and more challenges. The more it is obstructed, the stronger it becomes. The more it is avoided, the faster it grows. He who steps on and climbs over obstacles is the one who reaches the peak of the mountain.*

# The Canadian Mirage:

## Exploitation of Jaffna's Youth in Pursuit of Overseas Dreams



By:  
Our Reporter

In Jaffna, Sri Lanka, there exists a deep-seated yearning among its youth for what is believed to be a better life in Canada, a narrative that has become almost as common as the waves lapping its shores. However, this dream has also given rise to a murky underbelly of exploitation and false promises. This is highlighted in a recent incident involving a young man from Jaffna and a fraudulent individual posing as a journalist.

The allure of Canada, long perceived as a dreamland by Sri Lankan Tamils and known for its relatively accessible visa policies for Sri Lankans in recent times, has transformed into an almost feverish aspiration. Reports suggest that in the past year alone, approximately 20,000 youths from the North—an estimated unverified—have made their way to Canada on various visas. Fueling this exodus is a booming visa industry, with the going rates ranging from a staggering 65 lakhs to 1.5 crores for a visiting visa. The youths of Jaffna, both employed and unemployed, are willing to pay

these sums despite the lack of any guarantee of securing permanent residency upon arrival in Canada.

The recent arrest in Jaffna of a man who exploited these dreams vividly illustrates the themes of desperation and deceit. Posing as a journalist, the man tricked a local young man with promises of attending a major music event in Canada featuring the renowned Indian music director Santosh Narayanan. The youth, who had no connections to journalism, was misled by the con artist who claimed he could obtain a journalistic ID for him. This ID, the con artist reportedly promised, would facilitate his travel to Canada under the guise of covering Santosh Narayanan's music event. In exchange for this promise, the con man extorted 4.3 million rupees and provided a fake journalist identity card as part of the agreement.

As days turned into weeks with no sign of

the promised event, the young man, realizing the deceit, sought to reclaim his money, only to find the fraudster had vanished. The police, upon receiving the complaint, launched a thorough investigation, leading to the discovery that the suspect was hiding in Vavuniya and that the purported media company was a sham-operated by the fraudster himself.

This incident underscores the dire straits in which many Sri Lankan youths find themselves willing to risk everything for a chance at life abroad. It also sheds light on the troubling exploitation by those who prey on these dreams, turning hope into despair. As the economic and political landscapes in Sri Lanka continue to challenge its people, the youth, who represent the future of the nation, are caught in a crossfire of hope and desperation. They are continually searching for their own slice of peace and prosperity, however elusive it may seem.





*TNPF spokesperson Sugash Kanagaratnam and TNPF Secretary S. Kajendran at Shanthan's funeral*

# Political Dynamics in Shanthan's Case: A Brother's Revealing Post

By:  
**Our Reporter**

In a recent Facebook post, Mathisutha, the brother of the late Shanthan, also known as T. Suthenthirarajah—a former convict in the assassination case of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi—expressed an indirect criticism towards

certain Tamil nationalist politicians. He specifically acknowledged the crucial support his family received from three politicians: S. Shritharan, the newly elected president of Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi; Douglas Devananda,





*Sritharan*



*Angajan Ramanathan*

the fisheries minister and leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP); and Angajan Ramanathan, a Jaffna parliamentarian from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

Mathisutha emphasized the unwavering support these individuals provided, especially to his mother, which included 24-hour contact availability. He highlighted that, despite some reluctance to openly discuss his brother's case due to potential diplomatic tensions with India, these politicians prioritized humanitarian assistance over political concerns.

Neutral observers have criticized leaders of the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), including Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, Selvarajah Kajendran, Sugash Kanagaratnam, and others, for allegedly using Shanthan's death to further their political motives. According to these observations, these TNPF politicians, who reportedly did not contribute to efforts for Shanthan's release or the repatriation of his remains, are accused of manipulating his death for political rallies in Sri Lanka. This action has been perceived as the embodiment of distasteful politics.



*Douglas Devananda*

In Mathisutha's post, he explicitly acknowledges the genuine assistance provided by Sritharan, Douglas Devananda, and Angajan Ramanathan in his brother's case. Mathisutha's message is perceived by some as a subtle rebuke of the TNPF leaders, highlighting the irony in their actions compared to the true support his family received.

The actions of the TNPF leaders, which have been characterized as opportunistic, seem to have diminished the earnest efforts of the politicians who genuinely supported the family in a crucial time. At this point, Mathisutha's subtle yet powerful criticism underscores the contrast between the genuine aid provided by some and the self-serving motives of others.

# A Disheartening Blow to Jaffna University's Progress: The Vice-Chancellor's Myopic Ban on Departmental Donations



By:  
**T. Sitrampalam**



*S. Srisatkunarajah*

In a move that has been widely regarded as both misguided and authoritarian, the Vice-Chancellor of Jaffna University, Prof. S. Srisatkunarajah, has issued an internal circular putting an end to the influx of personal donations to university departments without his express approval.

This decree, which has sent shockwaves through the academic community, not only undercuts the autonomy of the departments but also jeopardizes the welfare of the students who stand to lose the most from this autocratic edict. The decision to centralize and control donations threatens to unravel the fabric of a system that has thrived on the goodwill and support of alums and benefactors.

Departments across the university, including highly regarded ones like the Medical Faculty, have long benefited from the generosity of donors who have been instrumental in driving progress through scholarships, funding research, and updating equipment—all essential to the maintenance and advancement of the university's esteemed academic programs.

By enforcing a blanket restriction, the Vice-Chancellor seems to be curtailing the proactive initiatives undertaken by individual departments to improve their financial and

educational resources. The requirement for donations to be funnelled through a central approval process hints at a disturbing inclination towards the consolidation of power, which can lead to bureaucratic delays, inefficiency, and perhaps even corruption. It strips the departments of their ability to engage directly with their benefactors, whom the red tape and potential for misallocation of funds may dissuade.

The rationale for this decision, which is to ensure transparency and align with the university's mission, rings hollow given the probable outcome: a decrease in resources crucial for supporting the educational needs of the students. The Vice-Chancellor's policy could create a chilling effect on future donations, discouraging philanthropists from contributing to an institution where the use of their funds may become mired in administrative quagmire.

In an era where higher education institutions across the globe are increasingly seeking autonomy to foster innovation and excellence,

the recent policy adopted by the University of Jaffna appears to be a deviation from this progressive trend. This policy, which ostensibly aims at ensuring accountability, seems to veer towards an unnecessary centralization of control. Such a move is likely to impede the institution's growth and may engender dissatisfaction among its students and faculty.

The Vice-Chancellor must reassess this policy in light of its potential long-term consequences on the university's progress. Engaging in constructive dialogue with department heads, faculty members, students, and donors is essential. This collaborative approach would help in devising a strategy that not only aligns with the interests of the university community but also supports the unique needs of the institution. The University of Jaffna has historically benefited from strong, department-specific support networks. It is important that these networks are not just preserved but also strengthened to ensure the overall well-being and advancement of the university's academic environment.

## Announcement to Our Readers:

In our upcoming issue, we will resume three riveting series that have captured the attention of our readers: 'Who is the Traitor?: Exclusive Interview with Karuna Amman', 'Anton Master Speaks: Former Military Office Chief of LTTE Shares His Untold Story with Jaffna Monitor', and 'Mahathaya's Saga: Power, Paranoia, and Politics in LTTE'. We have taken a deliberate pause from these series in this issue, but look forward to bringing them back, with their in-depth insights and compelling narratives, from our next issue

# Navigating Uncertainty: SLPP's Factional Divide Ahead of Presidential Election

■  
By:  
David Ignatius



The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) is currently at a crossroads, with emerging internal divisions over strategies for the forthcoming presidential election. A notable faction is steadfast in presenting an SLPP candidate, diverging sharply from another segment favouring support for incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe. The pro-Rajapaksa camp within the SLPP reinforced this perspective during a key executive committee meeting, though the dialogue was brief, pending the official announcement of the election.

In contrast, other SLPP members, notably those in high-ranking government roles, lean towards backing President Wickremesinghe.

In a significant political move, Mahinda Rajapaksa's son and SLPP parliamentarian, Namal Rajapaksa, was unanimously chosen as the National Organizer during the SLPP's latest executive committee gathering. This critical role, formerly held by his uncle Basil Rajapaksa, represents a strategic shift in the party's hierarchy. Political analysts interpret this as positioning Namal Rajapaksa for potential presidential candidacy, signalling his rising prominence within the party.

Amid these dynamics, Chief Government Whip Minister Prasanna Ranatunga, a former staunch Rajapaksha ally, casts doubt on the SLPP's prospects of fielding a successful presidential candidate. His recent comments include a nuanced critique of Namal Rajapaksa's appointment, subtly suggesting that Basil Rajapaksa would have been a more suitable choice. Moreover, Ranatunga projects a timeframe of





five to ten years before Namal Rajapaksa could viably contest the presidency, hinting at the need for more experience.

With the presidential election slated for October and debates within the SLPP about a potential early general election - a proposal President Wickremesinghe has reportedly declined - the political atmosphere is charged.

The alliance between the SLPP and the United National Party (UNP), historically antagonistic, has surprisingly endured. Despite their conflicting views on whether the presidential or parliamentary elections should take precedence, both parties have struck a delicate balance to keep their coalition intact.



Political pundits believe it's unlikely that a Rajapaksha family member will pursue the presidency this year, citing several reasons. A core challenge is finding a viable candidate outside the family, a notion the Rajapakshas seem reluctant to entertain, fearing it could diminish their influence over the SLPP. Moreover, siding with President Wickremesinghe could trigger a wave of defections from the SLPP to the UNP, potentially weakening the former's position in subsequent parliamentary elections.

Winning the presidential race is often a precursor to success in general elections. This insight is driving the Rajapakshas to prioritize a general election. Meanwhile, the UNP, recovering from their 2020 parliamentary defeat, is pushing for a presidential election first, hoping to capitalize on President Wickremesinghe's economic recovery efforts.



Basil Rajapaksa's attempts to nudge President Wickremesinghe towards a general election before the presidential polls have been unavailing.

However, the possibility of dissolving Parliament through a majority MPs' resolution exists, though rallying enough SLPP support for such a move, especially with some members now allied with Wickremesinghe, is a formidable task.

While the SLPP and UNP hold divergent election perspectives, a direct confrontation seems unlikely due to their interdependent relationship. Each party has its vulnerabilities, making their alliance a case of political necessity.



# When David Defeated Goliath: The Inside Story of the 1996 India-Sri Lanka Semi-final



By:  
**Dr. Aravinthan  
Arunthavanathan**

The 1996 World Cup Semi-Final between Sri Lanka and India is etched as a red-letter day in our cricketing history. It's a game that is still spoken about at every given opportunity, even 24 years later. And there's a reason for that. It was a typical David versus Goliath scenario. When an underdog triumphs over a favorite, it becomes a classic.

In this piece, I aim not merely to narrate the incidents on the field but also to delve into the thought processes and emotions of both camps during the build-up and throughout the game. In doing so, we will encounter many perspectives previously

unheard and unseen. (The insights shared here are partly derived from social media revelations by Sanjay Manjrekar, a member of the Indian team for this game, and Sri Lankan coach Dav Whatmore during their conversations with Ravi Ashwin and Russel Arnold in live videos.)

For those who cannot remember the details of the game, let's recap the proceedings so that the back stories can be understood better and their impacts analyzed.

## **Synopsis- Sri Lanka vs India 1996 World Cup Semi-Final, Kolkata**

Having won the toss, India opted to field first, putting Sri Lanka into bat. Despite losing

both openers in the very first over, Sri Lanka managed to post a challenging total of 251 runs in 50 overs. This was propelled by half-centuries from Aravinda De Silva and Roshan Mahanama, aided by useful thirties from Arjuna Ranatunga and Hashan Tilakaratne. In reply, India seemed well on their way to a final berth, with Sachin Tendulkar in prime form. However, at 98/1, Sachin was dismissed, courtesy of a brilliant piece of work from Kaluwaitharana. Commentating on air, Tony Greig asked, 'Will this be the start of a slide?' It turned out to be not just a slide but an avalanche. India crumbled to 120/8 on a deteriorating track, looking clueless against Sri Lanka's spin attack led by Sanath Jayasuriya. With the score at 120/8, the crowd became unruly, prompting match referee Clive Lloyd





to award the game to Sri Lanka. As a nation of 20 million went to bed with reinvigorated dreams of a World Cup win, a billion people across the Palk Strait went to bed hoping what had happened was just a bad dream.

What we witnessed on the ground was just the tip of the iceberg. There was far more happening than what met the eye. Now, let's take a deep dive into this intriguing journey, dissecting the backstage events that shaped this unforgettable match.

## The build-up to the clash

Both teams had dominated their opponents in the quarterfinals. Sri Lanka had ambushed the English batters with spin and decimated their bowlers with Sanath's brutal batting. Sanath's unprecedented exploits at such a critical juncture had significantly caught the Indian team's attention, especially regarding the power of the Sri Lankan opening duo. In the group stages in Delhi, Sanath and Kaluwitharana had ruthlessly torn through the Indian line-up, turning a mammoth chase into a seemingly minor task. As we would later

see, this profoundly impacted India's strategic approach to the semi-final match.

Meanwhile, India had emerged victorious in their monumental clash against arch-rivals Pakistan. On paper, boasting big names, Pakistan was considered stronger than Sri Lanka. Unlike the present, Pakistan consistently had the upper hand over India during those times. Having defeated them and fueled by emotional fanfare, the Indian team was on cloud nine. There was a sense of euphoria in the three days leading up to the semi-finals. Even the legendary Sachin Tendulkar recently admitted they felt confident about defeating Sri Lanka despite losing on the group stage. To put it succinctly, India was riding high on confidence, perhaps to the point of overconfidence, in the lead-up to the match. It was the perfect setup for the law of averages to come into play. The general expectation was that India's progression to the final in Lahore was a mere formality. India had everything to lose, while Sri Lanka had nothing to lose. This whole aspect significantly influenced some critical decisions that were to follow.

## The toss and the wicket

The Sri Lankans had executed their chases clinically in every game they played. Their performances against England and India were particularly impressive, showcasing the strength of Sri Lankan batting. They had effortlessly chased down India's target, racing to 50 runs within the first 4 overs – a feat remarkable for its time, decades before the advent of T20 cricket. This display of dominance surely left an indelible mark on the Indian camp, as we would soon see. Additionally, Sri Lanka had solid and experienced players like Mahanama and Tillakaratne batting at positions 6 and 7, who consistently came to the rescue during mini collapses in the middle order in both aforementioned matches. Given these successful strategies, Sri Lanka seemed to have no reason to alter their approach.

However, the situation wasn't as straightforward as it seemed. Dav Whatmore, the Sri Lankan coach, revealed that upon inspecting the pitch on the day of the game, he noticed that the soil underneath was unstable, and the wicket was deteriorating. This was a clear indication that the pitch might not withstand the duration of the match. Faced with this dilemma, would a strong leader like Arjuna Ranatunga reconsider his strategy? Definitely not. When Whatmore voiced his concerns, a confident Arjuna, alongside Manager Duleep Mendis, asserted their readiness to chase down any target set by the Indians. The decision was firm: win the toss and chase. Whatmore could only wonder what the outcome would be.

On the other hand, the Indian team had faced challenges in their recent pursuits. They had lost to Australia while chasing in

Mumbai and encountered difficulties at certain points against the West Indies in Gwalior. Additionally, they had chosen to bat first against Pakistan. Logically, in a high-pressure game like the semi-final, they should have opted to bat first. However, they had a different plan in mind, influenced heavily by the impact of Sri Lanka's successful chase in Delhi. The Indians were so intent on countering Sri Lanka's strength and pushing them out of their comfort zone by forcing them to set a target. This represented a fundamental error common in many walks of life: focusing more on disadvantaging the opposition rather than leveraging one's own strengths. In the eyes of the Indian team, Sri Lanka and their chasing prowess were inseparable considerations.

The toss went India's way; the decision went Whatmore's way. India decided to put Sri Lanka on the bat. Whatmore was a relieved man.

## The worst fears come true for Sri Lanka.

We can be zero for none in no time — this was Dav Whatmore's guiding mantra for the Sri Lankan middle order. Ever since they had reinvented their approach at the top of the order, the Lankan think tank was aware of the potential risks. While Kaluwitharana had been dismissed early against England, Sanath Jayasuriya had taken the spotlight. Both had provided swift starts against Kenya and India, so facing an early setback wasn't something they had encountered previously. However, when Srinath dismissed both Sanath and Kalu in the first over, caught by the third man, the worst fears of every Sri Lankan fan materialized. Yet, this aggressive approach was by design. If not for this strategy, Sanath's shot selection might have faced harsh criticism.



The experienced Sri Lankan middle order, however, was ready for such contingencies. According to Whatmore, it was the experience and stability of the middle order that enabled such an aggressive strategy at the outset. Being prepared is one thing, but executing is another. The million-dollar question was whether the Sri Lankan middle order would rise to the occasion.

As Sri Lanka faced their worst fears, the situation seemed exactly the opposite for India. In hindsight, however, this scenario backfired on the Indian team. As Sanjay Manjrekar would later reveal, the Indian strategy was based on the belief that Sri Lanka was overly reliant on their two openers. India's game plan hinged on the assumption that dismissing both early would effectively seal the game. This thought process dominated their preparations, with the team spending the majority of their strategy meeting—55 minutes out of an hour—focused on dismissing the openers. This was undoubtedly a reaction to

their previous encounter in Delhi. It was also the reason behind their decision to deploy Anil Kumble, their key bowler, early in the innings. However, this strategy did not play out as planned. The reasons for its failure, I will explain later. In essence, by concentrating too much on Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana, the Indian team missed the bigger picture. It's hard to blame them entirely; the extraordinary performance by the Sri Lankan openers in Delhi had reshaped expectations of opening batting and left a lasting impact on the Indian team.

**Ignore Aravinda at your own peril. Pay the price later.**

According to Sanjay Manjrekar, the Indian team hadn't paid much attention to Aravinda de Silva, a decision that, in retrospect, seems quite perplexing. However, a deeper analysis offers some explanation. Aravinda's significant performances in the tournament had been

primarily against the less formidable teams, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Against stronger teams like India and England, he hadn't made a notable impact in the earlier games. This oversight turned out to be a major advantage for Sri Lanka. With the Indian team's focus primarily on Sanath Jayasuriya, who had effectively taken apart the stronger opposition, Aravinda wasn't at the forefront of their planning. In their minds, he wasn't the key player to be wary of, an underestimation that would have its implications.

Arjuna Ranatunga, Sri Lanka's captain, knew who his match-winner was. 'Keep Aravinda happy, and he will win us the games' was his firm belief, a philosophy well-known in the Sri Lankan dressing room. As the saying goes, 'Cometh the hour, cometh the man.' Aravinda rose to the occasion, dismantling the high-flying Indian team by smashing 66 runs off just 47 deliveries. At the time of his departure, he

had scored out of the team's total 85 runs. His innings provided the foundation for Roshan Mahanama and Ranatunga himself to build a substantial total. The magnitude of that knock was immense. Scoring nearly 80% of the team's total at a strike rate of 140 in an era before explosive T20 batting in front of a hundred-thousand-strong crowd was nothing short of extraterrestrial excellence.

In their strategy, India compelled Anil Kumble to bowl with the new ball, which, in retrospect, resulted in a missed opportunity. Sanjay Manjrekar later reflected that this was a mistake, as he believed Kumble would have been more effective later in the innings with a softer ball, gaining more purchase than the other Indian spinners. Despite Kumble claiming Aravinda de Silva's wicket, this tactic had a significant opportunity cost for India, affecting their bowling plans during the crucial latter part of the innings.



The awe-inspiring and intimidating batting displayed by Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana indirectly set the stage for Aravinda de Silva to excel in what he does best, especially when it mattered the most.

As Sri Lanka posted a total of 251 in their allotted 50 overs, the Indian dressing room genuinely believed they had the game within their grasp, especially with their proficiency against spin bowling. This confidence was understandable. The Lankan bowling attack lacked a seasoned leader; both Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralitharan were still relatively young and lacked the fearsome reputation they would later acquire. With no significant firepower in the bowling line-up and an Indian batting order that had previously dominated the likes of Waqar Younis and his team, India had every reason to feel confident about the chase. Above all, they had the prodigious talent of Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar, who was in exceptional form. With him at the crease, nothing seemed impossible. Surely, it had to be India's game to win – or so the Indian camp believed.

## **Sachin's crime- it's not as easy for mere mortals as it is for geniuses.**

The problem with geniuses is that they can sometimes create a false sense of hope and security among their peers. By Sanjay Manjrekar's own admission, the Indian team was well aware of Sachin Tendulkar's genius at that time. They had become accustomed to playing a supporting role to his brilliance. Manjrekar, being a senior player from Mumbai like Sachin, played an apt supporting role himself, steadying the Indian innings after Navjot Sidhu's early dismissal. However, Sachin's ease at the crease on a challenging

pitch could have unintentionally given the rest of the team a false sense of security. With the score at 98/1, everything seemed to be going India's way. Sri Lanka's hopes appeared to be fading.

## **A moment that gave millions of goosebumps- Little Kalu to the fore**

At 98/1, Sachin Tendulkar attempted to guide a Sanath Jayasuriya delivery to fine leg. The ball trickled down, and Sachin impulsively set off for a single, only to watch in dismay as Romesh Kaluwitharana swiftly dislodged the bails. As the replays confirmed Sachin's dismissal, Tony Greig's voice resonated with the question, 'Will this be the start of a slide?' Billions of Indian fans prayed it would not be, while millions of Sri Lankan supporters hoped it would. This pivotal moment rekindled belief in the Sri Lankan camp and sent waves of excitement across the nation.

## **Dharmasena's beckoning smile and implicit message**

As Sachin departed, the Indian captain, Mohammad Azharuddin, stepped onto the field. Sanjay Manjrekar recalls that one of the first balls Azhar faced from Kumar Dharmasena spun viciously and bounced unexpectedly, sharply contrasting with the ease that Sachin had portrayed. This delivery was a stark revelation to the Indian team about the true nature of the pitch. Dharmasena's smile, resembling that of a child receiving an early Christmas gift, sent an unspoken message: the Sri Lankans were now confident they were back in the game. Manjrekar, at the non-striker's end, sensed the same. A wave of apprehension swept through the Indian camp.





## The avalanche and the ending

From that moment, it was not just a collapse but an avalanche. The Indian batting line-up disintegrated like a pack of cards on the treacherous pitch, overwhelmed by the Sri Lankan spin attack, led predominantly by Sanath Jayasuriya's left-arm spin. In a stunning turn of events, India lost 7 wickets for just 22 runs, and even making contact with the ball seemed an almost insurmountable challenge. As disappointment mounted in the stands, the crowd's frustration boiled over, leading to disruptions in the game. With India reeling at 120/8, Sri Lanka's path to the final in Lahore was all but secured.

However, some minds wondered whether India could have pulled off a miracle through Kumble and Kambli. At least the Indian camp felt there was no chance.

According to Sanjay Manjrekar, the sentiment in the Indian camp was one of resignation; they felt the game was slipping away. Vinod

Kambli, who wasn't having his best series, was at the crease, but the likelihood of him turning the game around in such a dire situation seemed incredibly slim. Manjrekar pointed out that, on a treacherous pitch like that, with ample overs remaining for the Sri Lankan spinners to exploit, any hopes of a comeback were exceedingly optimistic. This insight from Manjrekar sheds light on one of the lingering questions in the minds of many cricket fans about that decisive phase of the game.

And just like that, one of the most unforgettable games in Sri Lankan cricketing folklore reached its conclusion. What ensued was the fulfillment of one of the most cherished fairy tales in cricket history.

But as they say, it may not have been possible had the flip of the coin gone the other way or the ball gone wide of Kaluwitharana.

But it's when such little moments go one's way that bigger things transpire, which is the beauty of life and cricket.

# In Jaffna, Unregulated Acupuncture Culminates in Tragic Fatality



*The poster of the acupuncture center where the incident occurred*

In Jaffna, a distressing event has spotlighted the grave perils associated with unauthenticated and unsanctioned medical practices. Manikkam Sargunaraja, a 64-year-old inhabitant of Achchuvei Vallalay East, succumbed to an infection that developed subsequent to receiving acupuncture treatment.



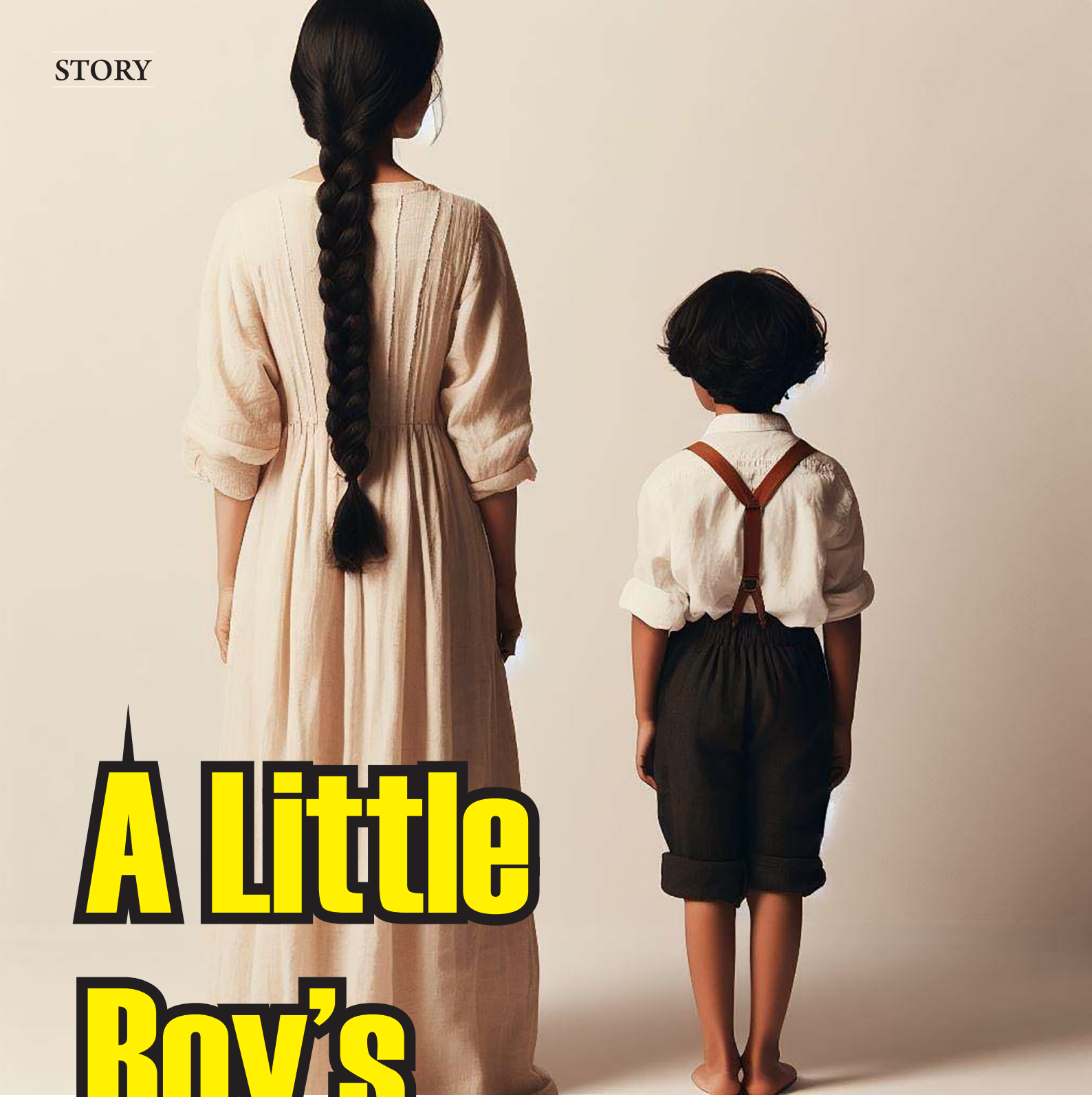
Sargunaraja, persuaded by an advertisement on Facebook, sought treatment at an acupuncture facility located on the brown road in Jaffna. This procedure, which entailed the insertion of needles into his knees, led to severe swelling and acute pain in his lower extremities, necessitating his admission to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Despite two weeks of intensive medical care, his life could not be saved.

Post-mortem analysis revealed that the infection was directly attributed to the acupuncture needles, thus shedding light on a significant oversight in the oversight of alternative medical practices in Sri Lanka. Notably, acupuncture practitioners in the area are not mandated to register, while professionals who are registered with the Sri Lanka Medical Council are prohibited from

advertising on Facebook and similar platforms.

This harrowing incident underscores the hazards of unregulated medical practices in Sri Lanka's northern region. The escalation of unlicensed practitioners and misleading advertisements in the Jaffna vicinity raises serious concerns. Nevertheless, there seems to be an absence of firm intervention from the Northern Provincial Health Department and local law enforcement agencies in tackling these hazardous practices.

The tragedy poignantly illustrates the lethal risks associated with medical treatments administered by unverified sources. It strongly calls for heightened regulatory oversight and comprehensive public awareness campaigns to ensure health and safety in the face of non-traditional medical practices.

A woman with a long, dark braid and a young boy standing back-to-back. The woman is wearing a long, light-colored dress with puffed sleeves. The boy is wearing a white shirt with rolled-up sleeves, dark shorts, and brown suspenders. They are standing on a light-colored floor against a plain, light background.

# A Little Boy's Story

Translated from the original Tamil short story *oru ciruvanin katai* (ஒரு சிறுவனின் கதை) from the 1964 collection of short stories titled *akkā* (அக்கா) by **A. Muttulingam**

Translated by:  
**Eluttukkiyavan**  
(எழுத்துக்கினியவன்)

A voice sang out rhythmically in the distance:

*kaṇṇādē karaiyāre kākkaṇavam pūchchiyārē,  
muṇṇūru muḷaṅgālaith thaṭṭikkoṇdu  
va... .. raṭ ... .. ṭō!*

The others responded aloud: *kūū kūū*.

Sri's body shivered. He, too, called out: *kūū*.  
But his voice was faint. The kids scattered  
crisscrossing the play area.

Sri clasped his hands, pressed his thumb  
on the ground to lift himself up and looked  
around.

There was no one around.

He was alarmed.

He, too, needed to hide quickly.

A cold shiver ran down his spine. He jumped  
down softly and opened his eyes wide to look  
around. There was no one around to help him.

Sri ran.

He ran, looking back from time to time.  
He was panting. He raised his head and  
looked above.

Overhead, he saw bunches and bunches of  
ripe fruit on the black plum tree.

He doesn't eat black plums. They make your  
teeth rot. That is how Raviyaṅ got a rotten  
tooth.

Sri's mother was the one who had explained  
this to Sri.

He bent down to go through the *pottu*, the  
whole in the fence intended as a quick  
shortcut. When he bent down, he felt his shirt  
tighten. It was a suspender shirt.

He was irritated.

He rubbed his eye with the back of his hand.  
It was itching.

— kat kadaa, kat kadaa kat kadaa.

Saras *akkā* was at her sewing machine. When  
she sews, she keeps her head down. She didn't  
see him.

His heart pounded.

He leaned his elbows on the sewing machine's  
outstretched tray, supported his chin and  
peered intently at Saras *akkā*.

He could see the remnants of the talcum  
powder still intact on her neck. That was  
Cuticura powder. He loved its smell.

His mother always put the talcum powder can  
somewhere high, out of his reach. He longed  
to dab himself with copious amounts of  
talcum powder.

Saras *akkā* stopped sewing and smiled at him.  
He said:

— Saras *akkā*, Saras *akkā*, show me a place to  
hide.

Saras *akkā* rubbed his head gently and told  
him to hide under the sewing machine.

They will never find him here. Even if they  
come looking for him, he should be absolutely  
quiet. Even if he felt like coughing, he should  
suppress the urge ...

He watched Saras *akkā*'s legs move  
rhythmically. Whenever the dressing gown  
parted slightly, he could see her feet. They  
were sparkling white.



They asked:

— Saras akkā, did Śrī come this way?

She responded:

— Nope, he didn't come this way.

Overjoyed, Śrī wrapped his arms around her legs. Her legs stopped moving.

She bent down and picked him up.

One of her arms was full of red bangles and the other, full of black ones.

Her arms were soft to the touch.

He was tempted to touch her pale palms.

When a pale palm is caned, blue welts appear.

Whenever the teacher raised a hand to cane him, he would involuntarily shiver.

But he wasn't permitted to withdraw his palm when the cane was in midflight. Once the cane landed, he was supposed to wipe that palm on his trousers and offer the other palm.

The teacher would always adjust his glasses and fix him with a piercing gaze.

But the teacher never caught him eating chocolate. He always gave half the chocolate to Raviyan, wrapping the piece of chocolate in his shirt before biting it into two pieces.

That would keep his saliva from getting onto the chocolate.

He would write letters to his father:

— I want a color pencil, two boxes of chocolates, a color pencil with a picture of a dog, and nothing else.

His father comes on Yārl̥dēvi. He had never seen it firsthand because Yārl̥dēvi comes in the middle of the night.

When he awoke, he would realize that his mother had carried him over and put him down to sleep by himself.

He was afraid to sleep alone. He knows that ghosts don't exist. His teacher had said so. But sometimes the shade of the Indian coral tree would sway like a ghost. But it was just a shadow.

At night, there was only the sound of the clock ticking:

—tak tik, tak tik, tak tik.

In the darkness, only the two hands of the clock would be visible. One long and the other short. They would both be shimmering.

Mahēn knows how to tell time from a clock, but S̥ri couldn't yet. He would, when he got to

third grade.

\* \* \*

*Ammā* would buy bread when the bread vendor came by. S̥ri would go to stand next to her. He would touch the bread and feel its warmth. He loved that fresh bread smell. He was the one tasked with delivering bread for Saras *akkā's* house.

*Ammā* would say:

— Go take this to Saras *akkā's* house. And she would yell after him:

— Just give it and return quickly without hanging around there.

But he would never return quickly. He was really fond of Saras *akkā*. Her face was round.

She would be wearing a black *poṭṭu* on her forehead. A big *poṭṭu*.

*Ammā* puts black *poṭṭu* on him, too. To keep him from moving his cheeks, she would press them tightly with her fingers. It would hurt him.

When you sharpen a pencil, you can check if it is sharp enough by puffing your cheek and poking it with the sharpened pencil.

Hard pencils are the best. Soft pencils tend to break.

His father bought him hard pencils for exams. S̥ri would always write with hard pencils.

He hoisted the bread above his head and ran, with a skip in his steps. The suspender on his shirt slipped down from his shoulders. He adjusted it back into place. But it slipped down again.

He ran, calling out to Saras *akkā*.

He bent down to go through the poṭṭu, putting one hand on the ground to support him. He called out.

— Saras *akkā!*

He shouted again.

— Hold that dog!

Gravel pricked his knee.

Red caterpillars are beautiful. He was tempted to pick one up and play with it. But he must not. It is the spit of Lord Siva. His weaving teacher had said so.

— Rath-thi- nēs-vari.

— Raththinēsvari.

Raththinesvari *akkā* interrogated him:

— What’s your name?

He replied:

— *Sri*.

She looked at him in fascination and asked again:

—Where do you live?

He replied:

—On the front porch.

They all laughed out loud, including Raththinesvari *akkā*.

*Sri* tried to laugh with them, too. But he felt like crying instead.

— Why did they laugh?

Ravi squeaked in a high-pitched voice.

—Kokuvil.

None of them laughed now.

Why?

Saras *akkā* took hold of the dog’s leash and called out to him. He stood up and dusted the dirt off his knees.

Saras *akkā* would help him with schoolwork. He would be mesmerized looking at her moving lips. Her eyes were refreshing like freshly peeled rambutāns.

His hair was cropped short, in the “police” style. She would gently rap his head with her knuckles, but only when he gets a sum wrong in math.

They would sing —

*moṭṭaip pāppā,* [bald baby,]

*caṭṭi uḍaippāṇ.* [will break the pot.]

*mūṇdu pāṇai* [Three jugs of]

*kūḷ kudippāṇ.* [kūḷ will he drink.]

He can drink ninety jack leaves full of kūḷ. His elder brother can drink a thousand, His father even more.

Saras *akkā* would ask again:

— If you take away nine from twenty two, how much is left?

A weary sleepiness would engulf him.

He would try to count on his fingers. Even if he would add his toes, he wouldn’t be able to get to twenty two.





He would look at her, smile gently and would blow out the oil lamp.

The flame will die silently. Saras akkā would bend down to kiss him.

He would cover his face; shyness would overcome him. One could kiss his sister because she was still in kindergarten. But he was already in second grade. No one should kiss him. Nevertheless, he liked Saras akkā. But he didn't like Kārthigēsu master, who often visited akkā. She was going to marry

him.

\* \* \*

Saras akkā used to be very shy. She would scamper away to hide whenever someone showed up. After the engagement, one is allowed to talk to her betrothed. Although he was a big boy, he had planned to wed Saras akkā.

But that was all before, not anymore.

*Akkā* loved black plums. He would pick out the choicest ones for her. But he would be too shy to go inside.

Kārthigēsu master was tall and dark. *Akkā* would be chatting with him.

Srī would stand at the entrance, hiding the black plums behind his back. He would peek through the gap in the door. *Akkā* would beckon him to come inside. She would take just one plum.

—This is enough for me Srī, you eat the rest. She wouldn't lift him to sit on her lap or pinch him playfully on his cheek.

He would be on the verge of tears.

He would throw away the black plums right by their veranda.

\* \* \*

It was *akkā* who took his measurements for the new shirt. It would be a suspender shirt. He would wear it for *akkā's* wedding. It would have lots of red buttons.

She pinched his eyelid. Srī lifted his face to look at her quizzically.

She called out over the fence to his mother. She said:

—Just come take a look at Srī; his whole body feels a little odd.

Ammā removed his shirt and gently stroked his back. Her face darkened.

Srī felt weary. Ammā carried him over to the mat. Old sarees were draped over the mat. He tucked his legs in and felt the warmth of the bedding.

He wanted to turn towards the other side. But his whole body was aching. Ammā told him to stay put and not exert.

If he stayed like this his illness would go away. He could then go to Sarasakkā's wedding. He would wear his new suspender shirt.

Saras *akkā* would have come by for fitting his shirt ... .. but now only ammā was allowed to come near him. She would blow everywhere on his body where he felt the burning sensation. That felt divine.

A bunch of neem leaves would be stuck onto a roof rafter. Ammā would have put it there. He would fix his stare on it. It would look as if it was very very close. But when he held out his hand, it would retreat beyond his reach, far far away.

One mile, two miles, ten miles, a thousand miles, a billion million miles.

He would only eat porridge. He would slurp it from his saucer. His saucer was green. Anṇai's was red, its edge chipped. His sister's was also green, but it had a white line on it.

If his sister took his saucer, he would pick a fight with her.

She would grab all the trinkets from the *maṇavarai*, the decorated ceremonial porch under which Tamil weddings take place, collecting more than him; he, too, would collect, secretly, without her knowledge.

*Akkā* would go to sit in the *maṇavarai*. She would be wearing a saree like a grown-up woman. But in fact, she was still a girl.

Kārthigēsu master would sit next to her. Tall, bespectacled, stylish. Srī was irritated by him.



The wedding car would be decorated exquisitely. It would be decked with green, blue, and red lamps. He would climb onto the wedding car, too. *Akkā* would sit very close to *Kārtigēsu* master, almost touching him.

He wanted to run to *Saras akkā*. Although there were lots of people there, *Saras akkā* would pick him up and sit him on her lap. He would be very shy, extricating himself from her and running away.

He would run to *Saras akkā* when *Ammā* was not looking. But he was afraid. He was not supposed to get wet. *Ammā* would smack him

if she found out he was wet.

\*\*\*

He turned over on the mat. It didn't hurt at all. But *Ammā* wouldn't let him get up. She kept saying that he would get better the next day, or the day after.

It was all lies. He could even hear the sound of wedding drums; he could hear the electricity generators.

It made him furious. He couldn't see any of the festivities. He couldn't even get to try on

his new shirt.

Ammā would take him to the temple for a convalescence bath. After that he can eat fish curry or get wet while playing.

He sat up. There were flies buzzing around him. He stared at them intently.

Bzzzzzzzz.

Sri tried shooing them away with his little hands. But they kept coming back.

He was tired. He would run away to akkā's house when ammā wasn't looking. He would climb onto akkā's lap. She would be biting her golden neck chain. Sri would grab it with two fingers.

The bread vendor's bell rang out. A dog ran away barking.

His chest pounded. He peeked through the window. Ammā was in the yard breaking leaves for the livestock.

Sri whispered:

—One pound.

It was awkward to put his feet on the ground after such a long time in quarantine. He grabbed the bread loaf in one hand and ran, turning his head from time to time to look behind him.

At a distance, ammā dropped the *kokkaththadi* and sprinted after him.

She screamed:

Dey Sri!

She called out again.

Don't run through the puddle, come here!

He took no notice and kept running, panting heavily.

He leaned one hand on the ground and bent himself through the *pottu*.

He felt a sharp pang on his bare back.

Ammā was standing behind him with a switch that she had torn off. She had just barely grazed him gently. But he felt like he was dying.

His sobs bubbled forth from within.

The dog sniffed the bread loaf on the ground and ran back home.

\*\*\*

He sobbed. His lean back heaved up and down with each sob. It burnt as if it was on fire.

He cried bitterly. He was definitely going to complain to his father when he returned home.

He could smell the porridge and knew it would be delicious. But he resolved not to want it. If ammā comes in he would roll over onto his stomach and turn his face away.

His sobs were subsiding. Soon they would stop.

He heard his mother banging the kitchen door shut. Once again, the sobs came forth uncontrollably.

He heard the staccato sound that her saree made as she walked.

No, he would not turn his face.

\*\*\*

# Pension Panic and the President's Strategy



Despite advocacy from Basil Rajapaksa, founder of the Podujana Peramuna (People's Front), and Mahinda Rajapaksa, the former President and a key figure in the party, for holding parliamentary elections before the presidential election, sources indicate that many within the party currently do not favour this approach.

This reluctance stems from a widespread belief among many members of parliament of the Podujana Peramuna that they are likely to face defeat in the next parliamentary elections. Such a defeat could result in the loss of their pensions.

Consequently, sources suggest there is a preference within the Podujana Peramuna to conduct the parliamentary elections only after the completion of the current term. This strategy aims to ensure the safeguarding of their pension funds, leading them to discreetly support the idea of holding a presidential election first.

As a result, they are sending envoys to the President to lobby for the presidential election to be prioritized. This move, which prioritizes party interests and pension funds, reflects the MPs of the Podujana Peramuna's adherence to traditional practices in Sri Lankan politics, where self-interest often comes before party or public interest.

The prevailing question is which option President Ranil Wickremesinghe prefers: a presidential race first or a parliamentary showdown? When we asked a political insider close to Ranil for the inside story, the answer was intriguing. 'It's all about the strategy!' he said. 'Imagine a parliamentary election first. Ranil will be in his running shoes, darting from one MP to another, imploring for their support.' However, he added that if the order is reversed to a presidential election first, and Ranil triumphs, it's a completely different scenario. Suddenly, MPs would be lining up, offering their most persuasive and obedient pledges to the newly empowered executive President. 'That's politics,' he said.

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