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UNAFRAID AND UNBOWED

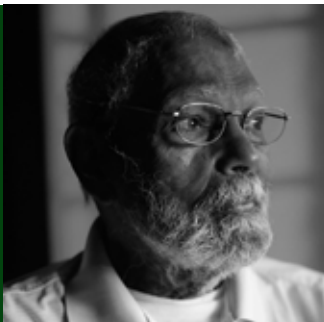
A close-up photograph of coconut fronds. The fronds are dark green and have a prominent central vein. They are heavily infested with numerous small, white, oval-shaped insects, which are whiteflies, covering the surface of the leaves.

## **The White Fly Onslaught: Crisis in Sri Lanka's Coconut Plantations**



03

Editorial



05

Laughing All the Way to the Polls: The Common Tamil Candidate Joke

08

Beyond the Medals: The Multifaceted Legacy of Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham

12

Development Setback in Tamil-speaking Areas Due to MPs' Negligence

15

The White Fly Onslaught: Crisis in Sri Lanka's Coconut Plantations

18

2019 Whitefly Outbreak: A Turning Point in Sri Lanka's Coconut Agriculture

20

Natural Synergy: Combating Whiteflies with Neem Oil and Soap

22

Harnessing the Allure of Yellow: Nature's Sticky Solution for Pest Control

23

Ladybugs and Lacewings: The Predatory Powerhouses in Agricultural Pest Management

25

Anton Master Speaks

30

Corruption at the Crossroads: Unveiling Injustice at the Vavuniya Passport Office

32

Chamari Athapaththu Storms Back to Top ICC Rankings with Record-Breaking Innings

34

Sri Lanka Unveils Shree Ramayan Trails to Captivate Pilgrims and Tourists

36

Sumanthiran Calls for Business Diaspora to Steer Clear of Politics

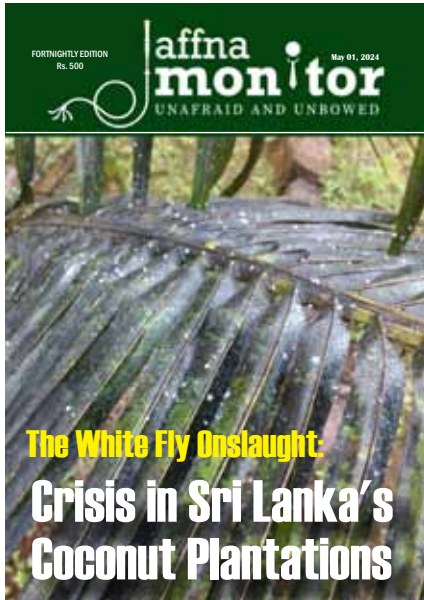
38

New Genetic Insights Reveal Ancient Connections Between Sri Lanka's Vedda and Indian Tribes

40

The Fall & the Rise; From Maligawatte to Mirpur, The Malinga-Kule redemption arc





# Looking Back, Moving Forward: Confronting Our History to Shape Our Future

Dear Esteemed Readers,

In our previous edition, we delved into the harrowing tale of the Verugal massacre—an event from two decades ago where Tamils tragically turned on each other. This sombre episode, often eclipsed by other calamities in our annals, provoked substantial feedback. Many shared constructive insights, yet a few staunch LTTE adherents outright denied the occurrence of the Verugal massacre. Such refutations of historical horrors are not merely unjust; they are perilous. Consider the uproar should anyone negate the Kumuthini boat massacre, the Valvettithurai massacre, or the Navaly Church bombing. Would those same dissenters keep their silence or look the other way? This serves as a grave reminder of the injustices that arise when history is selectively acknowledged or intentionally ignored.

Adding a twist of irony, some self-proclaimed former members of the LTTE's intelligence wing have lobbed accusations that our team at the Jaffna Monitor colluded with external forces to spotlight the Verugal massacre. These charges evoke images of the famously bumbling Inspector Clouseau from 'The 'Pink Panther' series, whose detective work was comically misguided and consistently off the mark. If these accusers truly were the cream of the intelligence crop, one has to ponder how Pottu Amman managed to run a 'formidable' intelligence operation with such characters in the mix. It appears these erstwhile spies might do well to enroll in an introductory fact-checking course rather than spinning conspiracy theories that could even make Clouseau himself blush with embarrassment!

Let us state this unequivocally and with profound clarity: the Verugal massacre was a harrowing tragedy, a bleak chapter where Tamils inflicted unspeakable harm upon their own. Both the assailants and the victims bore the same allegiance

to the LTTE. Given this truth, how can a faithful recounting of these events be twisted into an assault on the LTTE? How can it be branded as an anti-LTTE narrative when both those who perished and those who perpetrated were bound by the same cause? This isn't about taking sides; it's about acknowledging the painful realities of our shared history.

Furthermore, we staunchly reject the oversimplified dichotomy of traitor versus hero that some attempt to enforce upon the narrative of our struggle. We also do not adhere to the prevailing notion that the actions of the LTTE leadership should remain beyond scrutiny. It is essential to state unequivocally that our role is to question. The LTTE leadership not only met its tragic demise in the Nanthi Kadal lagoon but also dragged hundreds of thousands of people and thousands of fighters into a devastating conflict with a grim and senseless end. These actions and decisions by the LTTE leadership must be critically examined and scrutinized to ensure our future generations understand what went wrong. If we fail to do this, we perpetrate a great injustice upon them. During their reign, any criticism of the LTTE leadership was met with lethal consequences. If we do not scrutinize their activities now, then when will we?

The Eastern fighters, whether under the banner of the LTTE or Karuna Amman, took up arms driven by their deep commitment to the rights of the Tamil people. Labelling the Vanni Tigers as heroes and the entire Eastern cadre as traitors grossly misrepresents the complexity of their decisions and the intricate tapestry of our shared history. We refuse to endorse such a simplistic and unjust narrative.

In this edition, we turn our attention to a critical contemporary issue: the white-fly infestation and its significant impact on the livelihoods of Sri Lankan farmers. We have delved into the extent of this agricultural crisis and discussed potential solutions. It is our commitment to not only reflect on the echoes of our past but also to address the pressing challenges currently facing our community.

To our valued readers: Your engagement is crucial to us. We encourage you to share your thoughts and feedback. By confronting our past in all its complexity, we strive to build a more informed and empathetic future together.

Warm regards,

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

# Laughing All the Way to the Polls: The Common Tamil Candidate Joke



*Kumar Ponnambalam*



*Sivajilingam*



By:

**David Ignatius**

The debate surrounding the proposition of a 'common Tamil candidate in the upcoming presidential election' is gathering intense discussion across various platforms. Let's delve into the historical context to understand the implications by examining past presidential elections involving Tamil candidates.

In 1978, Sri Lanka marked a pivotal moment with a sweeping constitutional change that ushered in an executive presidential system. The first election under this new regime took place in 1982. Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress threw his hat in the ring with the bold proclamation,

"Tamil Nation is a separate nation." Despite the powerful slogan, the election results told a harsh tale. Kumar garnered 173,934 votes, a mere 2.67% of the national vote, relegating him to fourth place. The victor of the election was J.R. Jayewardene of the United National Party, with Hector Kobbekaduwa of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and Rohana Wijeweera of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna securing the second and third spots, respectively. Yet, the narrative shifted in Jaffna, where Kumar captured a significant 40% of the vote, showcasing a stark contrast in regional support.

When Kumar declared his run for the presidency, journalists sought





*Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Basil Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa*

insights from Mr. Amirthalingam, secretary of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). He sharply criticized the move, stating, "My alliance does not resort to such cheap tactics," and urged the Tamil populace to boycott the presidential election. Furthermore, TULF, alongside leftist Tamil parties, accused Mr. Kumar of entering the fray merely to siphon Tamil votes away from J.R. Jayewardene, inadvertently aiding in his electoral triumph.

The notion of a common Tamil candidate for president made a comedic comeback in the 2019 presidential election. After breaking ties with TULF and TELO, the ever-controversial Mr. Sivajilingam decided to go solo, throwing his hat into the presidential ring as an independent. He managed to scrape together just 0.09 percent of the votes (a whopping 12,256), turning his serious political bid into more of an election jest. Ironically, the Rajapaksas ultimately reaped the benefits from Mr. Sivajilingam's bid, as his presence in the race played into their strategic interests.

Reflecting on the outcomes of these two elections, particularly after the 1977 racial riots when Tamil aspirations for liberation were at their zenith, the voters in Jaffna District chose

to defy the TULF's boycott call and cast their ballots for Kumar Ponnambalam. Despite this local support, Kumar struggled to garner substantial backing from Tamils residing beyond the Northern and Eastern provinces.

In the 2019 eighth presidential election, Mr. 's bid as a Tamil candidate was resoundingly dismissed by Tamil voters from all regions. At the same time, the Tamil community's opposition to the Rajapaksas translated into robust support for Mr. Sajith Premadasa in the North, East, and Central Highlands, where he claimed notable victories.

Amidst the election fervor, suspicions surfaced about Mr. Sivajilingam possibly colluding with the Rajapaksas. These doubts were fueled by observations from political analysts who pointed out that Sinhala-language media outlets, known for their pro-Rajapaksa stance, frequently featured Mr. Sivajilingam's fiery interviews on Tamil nationalism. Such coverage was seen as a tactic to stoke Sinhala nationalism, which, in turn, is believed to have bolstered the Rajapaksas' electoral stronghold.

In the 2019 eighth presidential election, Tamil voters came to a sobering realization: "A Tamil

cannot achieve anything in the presidential election." The decision to field a common Tamil candidate risked splitting the Tamil vote. As a result, the next president would likely ascend to power predominantly with Sinhalese support, further widening the divide between the Colombo leadership and the Tamil populace. This dynamic risked diminishing the national sentiments of the Tamils.

Therefore, the Tamil people and those genuinely fighting for Tamil rights must avoid falling into these deceptive tactics of fielding a common candidate. They should completely reject any moves to field a Tamil common candidate in the upcoming presidential elections, recognizing these strategies as potentially undermining their struggle for genuine autonomy and rights.

According to the current political situation in Southern Sri Lanka, the major parties and primary candidates appear evenly matched, creating a scenario where neither a Southern party nor leader can win a majority of votes on their own. The majority of people openly admit that the decision of who will become the president rests in the hands of minorities. In such a decisive moment, Tamils can decide who they want as the winning president and take part in the victory.

In the previous presidential election, the Rajapaksas reportedly utilized Mr. Sivajilingam to secure a victory. It is anticipated that this time, too, a Southern presidential candidate supported by the Rajapaksas might indirectly promote a Tamil candidate to gather Sinhala nationalist votes in the South. Similarly, regional dominance and efforts to prevent Tamils in Sri Lanka from emerging as a decisive force are expected to be vigorously pursued.

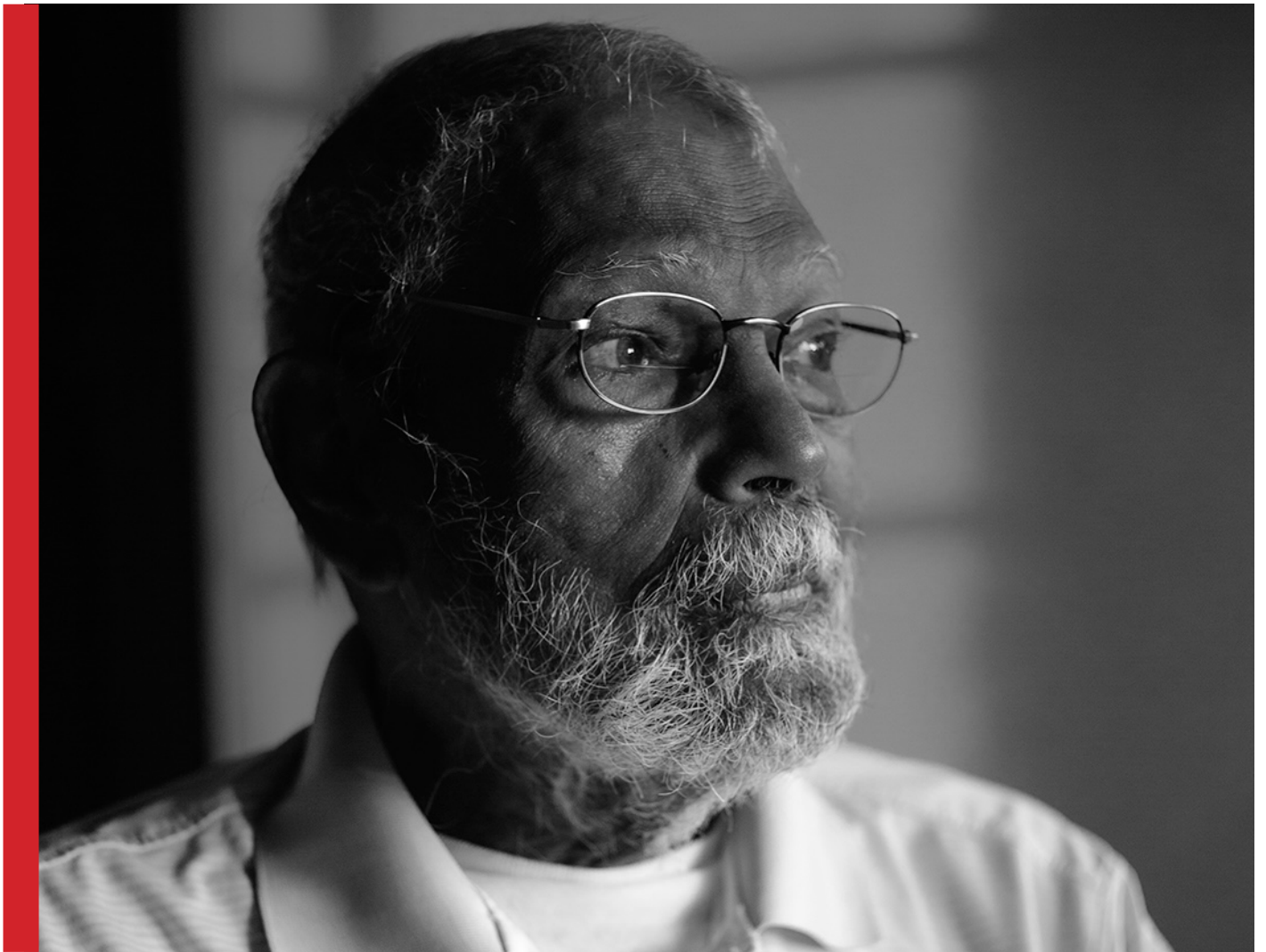
This tactic underscores the strategic manipulation in the political landscape, where the Rajapaksas might use the facade of diversity and minority inclusion to consolidate the Sinhala nationalist base, thereby weakening the Tamil position and fragmenting their votes. This scenario necessitates a critical and strategic response from the Tamil community to counteract these maneuvers and to leverage their collective voting power to influence significant political outcomes.

Moreover, politicians who resist forming a common Tamil alliance during parliamentary elections yet advocate loudly for a common candidate in presidential races often expose their true motives and the interests they represent when their facades drop in such critical moments. This scenario highlights the urgent need for strategic unity and clear direction among Tamil parties, enabling them to effectively wield their political influence to secure significant advances in governance and rights.

Sri Lankan Tamils should fortify their stance through a strategic plan that entails backing a Tamil-friendly and viable presidential candidate. This strategy demands active engagement in central political processes to steer policy and governance reforms. By synchronizing these initiatives, Tamils can better ensure that their political and administrative demands are met more cohesively and effectively.

If some Tamil leaders imprudently push for a common Tamil candidate in the presidential election, it would not only be seen as a farcical move but also aid Sinhala chauvinistic parties in using this as a tool to solidify the Sinhala majority votes. It is crucial that Tamils avoid this mistake.

# Beyond the Medals: The Multifaceted Legacy of Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham



By:  
Our Reporter

Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham, the pioneering athlete who secured Ceylon's first gold medal at the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo, died at 89 in Los Angeles, USA. Born in a modest dwelling in Periyavillan on the Jaffna Peninsula, his ascent to global recognition stands as a powerful testament to the resilience and indomitable spirit of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. His legacy transcends his athletic achievements,





*A 17-year-old Nagalingam Ethirveerasingam with the medals he won at the 1951 Ceylon AAA National Meet, showcasing the early promise of a future athletic champion.*

symbolizing a community's perseverance and steadfast resolve in challenging circumstances.

Born in 1934, Ethir, as he was affectionately known, overcame significant odds. His humble beginnings in a one-room hut did not deter him from setting his sights high—quite literally. Self-taught from pictures in an athletics book, he made a vow at a young age while watching the 1948 Olympics to one day compete on the world stage. His dreams materialized sooner than expected when he represented Ceylon at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics at merely 17 years old, a prelude to a storied athletic career.

Ethir's gold medal victory at the 1958 Tokyo

Asian Games was not merely a personal achievement but a historic milestone for Ceylon. This triumph coincided with a period of severe unrest back home, as his homeland was embroiled in the 1958 anti-Tamil riots—a turmoil Ethir was unaware of until his return. He famously remarked in an interview that while he, a member of the Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic minority, was winning a gold medal for the country, the majority of that same nation was perpetrating violence against its own people. This stark contrast between his sporting success and the senseless violence at home profoundly affected him, shaping his subsequent endeavours in conflict resolution and community rebuilding.



*Nagalingam  
Ethirveerasingham  
receives acclaim  
from former  
President SWRD  
Bandaranaike*



At the 1962 Jakarta Asian Games, Dr Ethirveerasingham secured the silver medal, further cementing his status as a distinguished athlete. Previously, at the 1954 Manila Asian Games, he achieved a remarkable feat by jumping the same height of 1.95 meters as the gold, silver, and bronze medalists. Despite this accomplishment, he was placed fourth due to having more misses than the other competitors.

Ethir's achievements on the track were paralleled by his academic pursuits. After transferring to St. Joseph's College in Colombo to be closer to his coach, he won a scholarship to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he later earned a master's degree and a PhD. His educational background led him to roles far beyond the track, teaching and conducting research in Sierra Leone,

Nigeria, and Papua New Guinea.

Despite his global recognition, Dr. Ethirveerasingham's connection to his homeland remained unwaveringly strong. In 1994, as many Sri Lankan Tamils were fleeing the escalating conflict—often at great risk and significant expense—he resolutely chose to return. At the age of 60, he went back to lend his expertise at the University of Jaffna during the peak of the civil war. His involvement extended far beyond academic responsibilities; he dedicated himself to volunteering in devastated regions, making significant contributions to educational, sports, and humanitarian projects. Beyond these endeavours, his most defining role emerged as a peacemaker and educator. His mediation efforts during the Sri Lankan civil war and his passionate advocacy for peace and



*May 25th, 1958. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham receives the gold medal at the Asian Games in Tokyo, completely unaware of the pogrom unfolding back on the island.*

reconciliation earned him widespread respect across all factions of the conflict.

In 1998, a significant honour was extended to Dr Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham by Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike, who offered him the prestigious 'Deshabandu.' However, he declined the honour in a profound display of solidarity and principle.

In his letter to President Bandaranaike, he expressed his reasons, stating, "I cannot in good conscience accept such a title when my people are suffering and the war is continuing." This decision underscored his deep commitment to being part of his brethren's struggle, emphasizing his unwavering dedication to the well-being and justice of his community during a conflict.

Ethir's life was marked by significant challenges. His candid discussions about the racial discrimination he faced, even as a celebrated athlete, illuminate the complexities of his experiences. He once disclosed that, despite qualifying, he was initially not selected for the Asian Games, a decision he attributed to systemic discrimination by the then Sri Lankan government. He managed to overcome this obstacle through his unwavering resilience and with the support of his community, media advocates, and many kind-hearted Sinhalese individuals who rallied behind him.

Survived by his wife, three children, and eight grandchildren, Dr. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham's story transcends that of a mere sportsman to embody a beacon of hope. His legacy is a powerful testament to the transformative impact of sports and education, demonstrating how one can rise above societal and personal challenges to forge a path of individual success and societal betterment. His determination, educational pursuits, and deep commitment to his roots have crafted a legacy that will endure for generations.

At the Jaffna Monitor, we join the many who are mourning his passing, remembering him not only for his monumental achievements but for the indelible mark he left on our hearts and our history.



# Development Setback in Tamil-speaking Areas Due to MPs' Negligence



*R. Sampanthan*



*M.A. Sumanthiran*

■  
By:  
**Our Reporter**

A significant lapse in responsibility by five Tamil MPs has resulted in the loss of 25 crore rupees originally designated for development projects in Tamil-speaking areas. The Jaffna Monitor learned that this substantial sum, which was part of a broader financial allocation for community improvement, remained unclaimed because the MPs failed to submit their project proposals within the required timeframe.



*Selvarajah Kajendren*



*Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam*

The parliamentarians in question, including R. Sampanthan and M.A. Sumanthiran from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), C.V. Wigneswaran from the Tamil People's National Alliance (TPNA), and Selvarajah Kajendren and Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam from the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF), were each allocated five crore rupees. Their failure to act in a timely manner by submitting proposals has not only halted potential developments that could have benefited their districts but also highlighted the need for improved accountability and project management among elected officials. While R. Sampanthan was elected from Trincomalee District, the other four MPs were elected from the Jaffna District.

This incident directly impacted the intended improvements in their regions, stalling progress and enhancing the living standards of their districts. It underscores the critical need for elected representatives to manage their roles with greater diligence and adherence to deadlines, ensuring that development funds are utilized effectively and for the intended purposes.

The incident provides a critical governance insight: primary accountability for such



*C.V. Wigneswaran*

oversights resides with the individual Members of Parliament. This scenario acts as a stark reminder of the necessity for proactive engagement and diligent responsibility in parliamentary duties. It calls for a thoughtful reassessment and strategic realignment by the involved representatives to avert similar shortcomings in the future. As the Tamil community diligently pursues enhancements across various sectors, ensuring the accountability of its elected officials is essential, serving as a cornerstone for authentic progress and community development.



# Revamped Nagapattinam to Kangesanthurai Maritime Service to Bolster Regional Connectivity



By:  
**Our Reporter**

**T**he long-awaited revival of the Nagapattinam to Kangesanthurai ship service, set to commence operations on May 13th, is poised to usher in a renewed era of connectivity and cultural exchange across the Tamil regions, Jaffna Monitor learns. According to reliable sources, this initiative is ready to make waves with the newly refurbished 'Sivagangai' vessel at the forefront, overcoming numerous delays that have historically plagued its launch.

Crafted to foster cultural ties and offer economical travel options, the service is strategically designed to serve as a vital maritime link. Scheduled to run daily, it promises to enhance commercial exchange and tourism, connecting these regions rich in historical significance. Each journey from Nagai to Kangesanthurai will offer a swift four-hour passage, with return voyages

scheduled on the same day to maximize both convenience and operational efficiency.

The pricing strategy is notably inclusive and aimed at broadening accessibility to the service. Based on the prevailing exchange rates, a round-trip fare is set at 114 US dollars, equivalent to roughly 34,000 Sri Lankan rupees. This pricing model is intended to attract a wider audience, encouraging an appreciation for the distinct beauty and heritage of the connected regions.

In addition to the launch's importance, sources indicate that President Ranil Wickremesinghe is expected to attend the inaugural journey. As the service sails through the waters of the Gulf of Mannar, it links geographic locations and seeks to strengthen the bonds among diverse communities, fostering a sense of unity.



# The White Fly Onslaught:

## Crisis in Sri Lanka's Coconut Plantations



*A coconut leaf in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, heavily infested with whiteflies, showcasing the significant challenge these pests pose to local agriculture.*

In recent years, Sri Lanka, especially in its northern regions such as Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu, where the Tamil majority resides, has been grappling with a significant agricultural threat: the White Fly. Initially targeting mainly coconut palms, this pest has begun to attack various other traditional crops of Sri Lankan Tamils and possesses the potential to harm additional agricultural produce. This development

is causing alarm among farmers, with widespread reports of infestations and notably reduced coconut yields. There have been reports of coconuts being sold at exorbitant prices of 120 and 150 rupees in Kilinochchi, a place known for its relatively lower prices, thanks to the abundance in the region.

Though minuscule whiteflies pack a devastating punch in the world of agriculture

and gardening. Resembling tiny, fluttering snowflakes, these pests are far from benign. They belong to the family Aleyrodidae, and scientists report there are hundreds of species, with the greenhouse whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum*) and the silverleaf whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*) being particularly notorious.

Whiteflies extract plant juices, leading to the weakening of plants. Signs of heavy infestation include yellowing, drying, and premature dropping of leaves. Furthermore, these pests are vectors for crop viruses, exacerbating their impact and can significantly reduce yield.

High officials from the Coconut Research Institute note that globally, approximately 1500 species of White Fly exist, with four species particularly threatening to Sri Lanka's coconut palms. These include the Palm-infesting whitefly, Citrus-nesting whitefly, Spiralling whitefly, and Coconut whitefly. The Spiralling whitefly in Sri Lanka dates back to 1990 when it was initially perceived as a minor pest for coconuts compared to other crops.

The first significant outbreak in Sri Lanka's coconut plantations occurred in 2019, originating in the Kegalle District. Factors such as illegal importation of Palmae group seedlings, climate change impacts, and a drop in natural predators due to excessive insecticide use on other crops are thought to be contributing causes.

These flies have since spread to various districts, exacerbating problems like the Weligama Coconut Leaf Wilt disease. A diverse range of plants, including banana, guava, citrus, avocado, and many more, serve as hosts for the White Fly, underscoring the wide-reaching nature of this issue.

Scientists recommend various control measures, including yellow sticky traps



and insecticides like Neem oil and soap mixture, Thiomethoxam, Carbosulfan, and a combination of Chlorantraniliprole and Thiomethoxam.

The Neem oil and soap mixture is remarkably advised for its lower toxicity to the natural enemies of whiteflies, while artificial insecticides are suggested for newly infested areas and coconut seedling nurseries.

In addition to chemical solutions, the search for biological control methods is ongoing. The involvement of international expertise in importing exotic natural enemies of the white fly illustrates the collaborative efforts to curb this pest.

Through coordinated efforts encompassing awareness, chemical and biological control, and international cooperation, there is hope to mitigate this crisis and safeguard the livelihoods of farmers and the health of Sri Lanka's agricultural sector.

Recently, the Coconut Cultivation Board initiated an experimental effort in Jaffna to control White flies by increasing the population of their natural predators, including certain insects and bees. The results of this experiment are expected to be evident soon. The Board authorities have stated that owners of coconut trees affected





by the White flies can seek solutions from the Coconut Cultivation Board. It is reported that a division of the Board is operational in each regional agricultural service station, where affected individuals can submit their complaints. However, it is emphasized that the issue of White flies cannot be resolved through individual efforts or by a few farmers alone. The menace of White flies is a collective challenge affecting entire areas. If controlled in one house, the White flies may reappear after a short period from a neighbouring house. Therefore, it is crucial to address this issue through a community-wide collective effort, as the relevant departmental authorities recommended.

A few social enthusiasts have highlighted that the Tamil community has already lost a significant number of Mull Murukku (Indian coral tree) trees. In Tamil culture, the Mull Murukku holds a highly auspicious place and is an integral part of weddings, specifically during the 'Kannikaal' ritual. This ritual in Sri Lankan Tamil weddings involves planting a specially prepared stick in the courtyards of both the bride's and groom's homes. However,

this species is becoming endangered due to diseases affecting the Mull Murukku and the consequences of urbanization.

Botany departments exist in higher education institutions within the Tamil community. Given the irreplaceable role of Mull Murukku in Tamil culture, questions arise as to why experts or scholars in these departments haven't been able to save it. In recent times, some weddings have seen Croton plants and drumstick tree sticks replacing Mull Murukku, leading people concerned about cultural preservation to wonder if an alternative for coconuts might also be necessary in the future.

These concerned individuals also emphasize that appropriate, field-specific research is crucial to address the issue of White flies and prevent coconut trees from disappearing like the Mull Murukku. The northern and eastern regions, suitable for dry zone agriculture, currently lack a dedicated coconut research centre. Therefore, it is suggested that a research centre focusing on coconut cultivation, appropriate for these areas, should be established.



# 2019 Whitefly Outbreak: A Turning Point in Sri Lanka's Coconut Agriculture



In 2019, Sri Lanka's coconut plantations faced a significant challenge when the first major outbreak of pests was reported, originating in the Kegalle District. This event marked a critical turning point for the agricultural sector, particularly for communities dependent on coconut farming.

Scientific analysis pointed to the infestation being predominantly caused by whiteflies. Researchers and agricultural experts swiftly gathered data, confirming that the Kegalle District was the epicentre of this outbreak. This was evidenced by the drastic reduction in coconut yields, which was notably lower compared to previous years' data. The stark

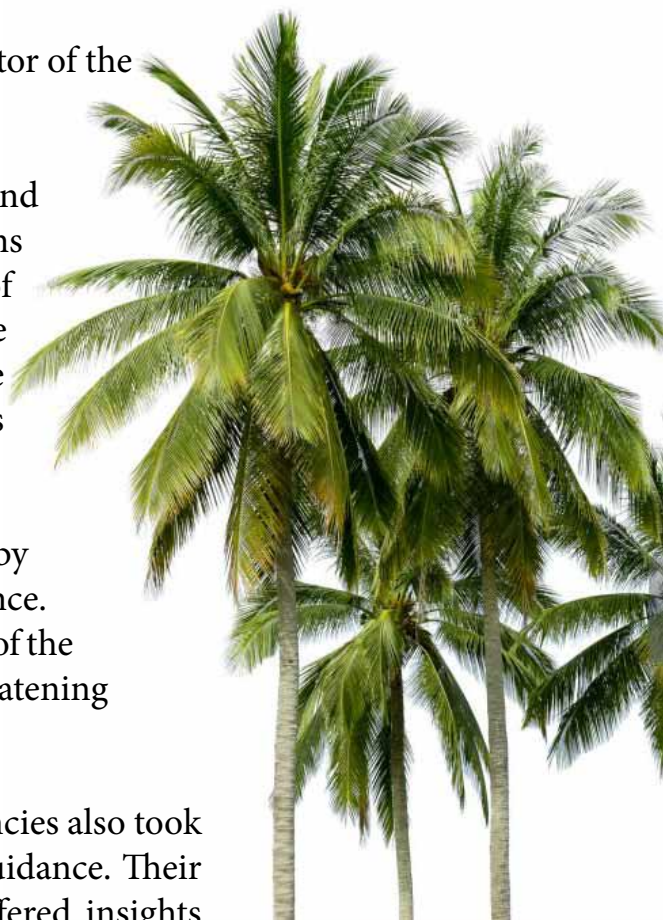


contrast in the productivity levels served as a clear indicator of the severity of the infestation.

Furthermore, local farmers' eyewitness accounts and photographic evidence of the affected coconut palms supported these findings. Leaves exhibited classic signs of whitefly damage, such as yellowing, wilting, and premature dropping. These observations were consistent with the patterns typically associated with whitefly infestations, as documented in agricultural case studies.

The government and agricultural bodies responded by deploying teams to assess the situation and provide assistance. Reports from these teams revealed the widespread nature of the problem, not just confined to Kegalle but potentially threatening neighbouring regions as well.

In addition to local efforts, international agricultural agencies also took note of the situation, providing technical support and guidance. Their reports further validated the initial assessments and offered insights into potential long-term solutions and prevention strategies.





# Natural Synergy:

## Combating Whiteflies with Neem Oil and Soap



Neem oil, when amalgamated with soap, transforms into an efficacious, natural antidote against the pernicious whiteflies, as scientists assert. This concoction's proficiency stems from a dual-action modality, targeting the pests across various developmental stages and impeding their customary activities.

Scientific studies reveal that Azadirachtin, the principal constituent of neem oil, is a naturally occurring insecticide that disorients whiteflies' hormonal systems. It obstructs the larvae from maturing, interferes with their moulting process, and can even inhibit egg-laying. This hormonal disruption plays a pivotal role in regulating the pest population over time. Additionally, the repellent attributes of neem oil, attributable to its bitter taste and potent smell, dissuade whiteflies from feeding on plant juices, thereby mitigating further harm.

As indicated by agricultural research, integrating soap into this blend augments its effectiveness.





Soap functions as a surfactant, ensuring the neem oil is uniformly distributed and remains adherent to plant surfaces for extended efficacy. Moreover, soap's insecticidal properties are well-documented. It breaches the whiteflies' waxy outer layer, culminating in dehydration and mortality. Soap also obstructs their respiratory pores, further contributing to their expiration.

As elucidated by scientific research, the fusion of neem oil and soap results in a synergistic effect. While neem oil systematically disrupts growth and repels pests, soap provides immediate insecticidal action. This combination is a formidable strategy in managing whitefly



infestations, particularly lauded in organic agriculture and by eco-conscious gardeners for its natural derivation and biodegradability. This approach not only addresses the immediate pest dilemma but does so in a manner that minimizes ecological ramifications.





# Harnessing the Allure of Yellow: Nature's Sticky Solution for Pest Control

A yellow sticky trap is a brilliantly simple yet surprisingly effective method for managing pests, particularly in agriculture and gardening. This ingenious device harnesses the natural attraction insects have to the colour yellow. Crafted from a vibrant yellow material that catches the eye of flying pests like whiteflies, aphids, fungus gnats, and leafminers, each trap becomes a beacon of doom for these unwanted guests.

The secret lies in the sticky coating that covers the trap's bright surface. As insects flock to the yellow hue, they



*A yellow sticky trap, a simple yet effective tool used in pest management to capture and monitor insects in agricultural settings.*

find themselves ensnared by the adhesive, unable to escape. This not only curtails the pest population, enhancing plant health and crop yield, but also provides vital insights into the types of insects invading a space and the severity of the infestation.

Their non-toxic nature makes yellow sticky traps particularly appealing, offering a safe, environmentally friendly alternative to chemical pesticides. These traps excel in controlled environments like greenhouses and are equally effective for indoor plants and outdoor gardens, making them a versatile tool in the fight against flying pests.



*Yellow sticky traps tied around coconut trees in Sri Lanka, serving as an eco-friendly method to control pest populations and protect the trees without the use of harmful chemicals.*

# Ladybugs and Lacewings:

## The Predatory Powerhouses in Agricultural Pest Management

### Ladybugs and Lacewings: The Predatory Powerhouses in Agricultural Pest Management

In the ongoing battle against whiteflies, biological control has emerged as a key strategy, championed for its effectiveness and gentle impact on the environment. Among the most formidable allies in this natural fight against pests are ladybugs and lacewings, known for their voracious appetite for whitefly larvae, making them essential in controlling these harmful pests.

Ladybugs, belonging to the family Coccinellidae, are particularly effective in curbing the population of whiteflies. They consume large quantities of larvae and eggs of whiteflies, bringing about a significant reduction in their numbers within a short span. Similarly, lacewings, whose larvae are often referred to as "aphid lions" due to their



*Ladybugs, nature's pest control agents, vividly captured as they navigate a leaf. These beneficial insects are celebrated for their appetite for aphids and other harmful pests."*



*Lacewings, delicate yet fierce predators, seen here resting on a plant. Known for their role in biological control, their larvae are voracious consumers of a variety of insect pests.*



aggressive predatory behaviour, play a crucial role in controlling whitefly populations by feeding intensively on their larvae.

Introducing these natural predators into ecosystems where whiteflies are a problem can lead to a noticeable decrease in the pest population. Research has demonstrated that areas treated with ladybugs and lacewings see a faster and more pronounced drop in whitefly numbers compared to regions that rely on chemical pesticides.

One of the primary advantages of using these predators lies in their ability to reach and manage pests in hard-to-access areas, like the undersides of leaves, where chemical treatments may not be effective. Moreover, unlike chemical pesticides, which can harm non-target species and often lead to pesticide resistance, ladybugs and lacewings provide a balanced and sustainable pest management solution.

Historical evidence from organic farming practices further supports the efficacy of biological control. Farms that have integrated natural predators into their pest management strategies have consistently reported lower levels of whitefly infestation compared to those that depend solely on chemical methods. This correlation underscores the practical benefits of employing natural predators and highlights their role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

By leveraging the predatory capabilities of ladybugs and lacewings, farmers and gardeners can reduce their reliance on harmful chemical pesticides, thereby enhancing biodiversity and fostering ecological balance. This approach not only aligns with the principles of sustainable agriculture but also ensures long-term agricultural productivity and environmental health.



# Anton Master Speaks:

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



### Part- 6



BY:

**Kaniyan Pungundran**

கணியன் பூங்குன்றன்

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

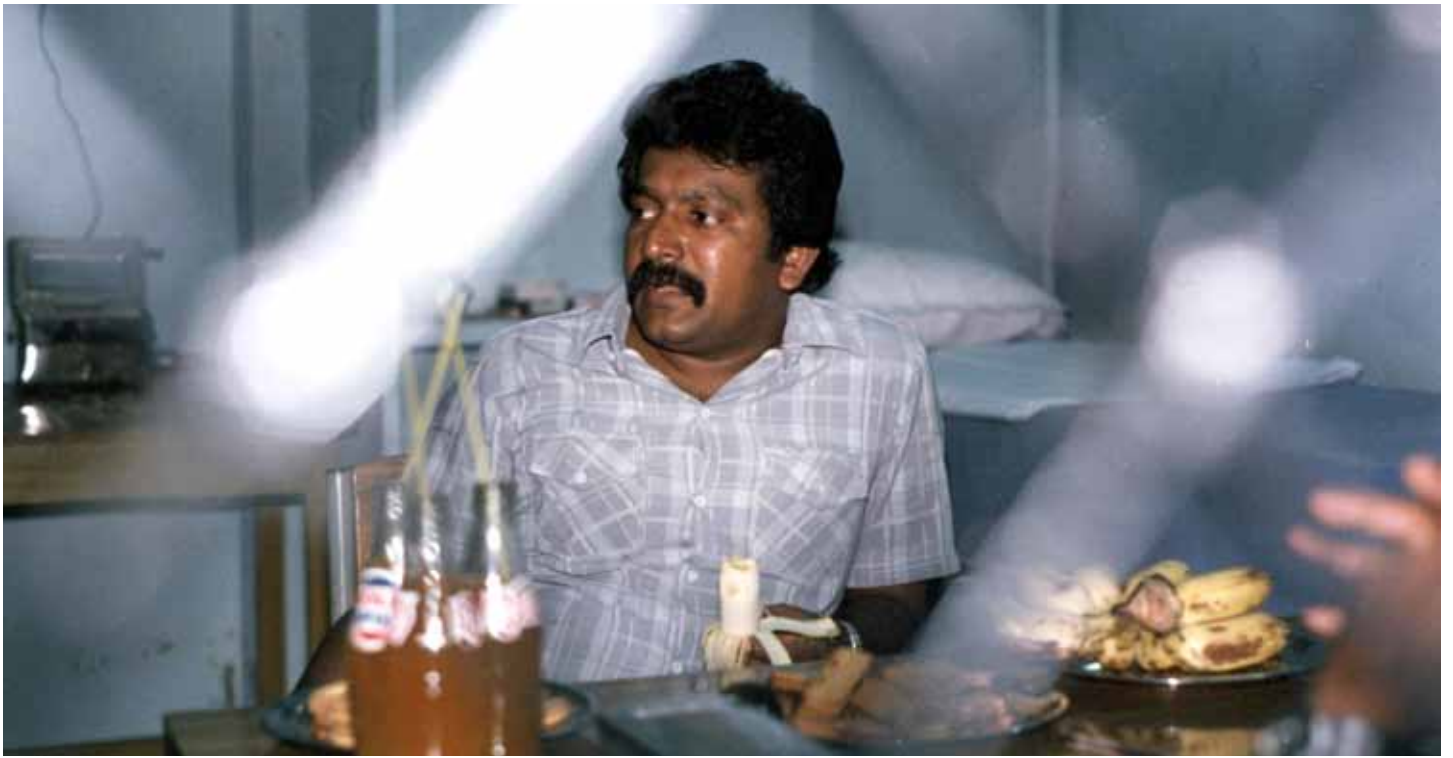
### The most satisfying moment in my militant career

In the wake of the burning of the library and the subsequent destruction of downtown Jaffna in 1981, tensions escalated rapidly. People reported seeing several buses loaded with Buddhist monks arriving at the Naga Vihara on Stanley Road in Jaffna. Rumours spread quickly that the monks were also involved in the burning of the library.

On the same day, I accidentally visited a secret LTTE meeting house; my visit was unplanned. In the house, prominent members, including Rasupillai, Seelan, and Mahathaya, were preparing for a retaliatory attack on the Buddhist monks at Naga Vihara Temple. They planned to kill as many Buddhist monks as they could. They mistakenly believed that the monks had participated in the burning of the library.

I realized the gravity and foolishness of the plan and became convinced that, had this attack been carried out, it would have irreparably harmed the legitimacy of the Tamil liberation movement. Feeling nervous and tense, I knew I couldn't stop the planned attack alone. However,





*From left: Gopalswamy Mahendraraja alias Mahathaya, Mathivathani Erambu—wife of Prabhakaran, Velupillai Prabhakaran, and Raghu alias Varatharasan in the mid-1980s*



Prabhakaran could. I urged them not to take any action until I returned from meeting with Prabhakaran.

I rushed to see Prabhakaran, who was lying ill in one of my safe rooms. I explained the consequences of such actions to him, emphasizing that an attack would tarnish the reputation of our movement and irreversibly brand us as terrorists beyond redemption. I stressed that if this reckless attack happened, it would immediately end our struggle for freedom.

Prabhakaran agreed with my arguments, and I obtained a written order to halt the attack. With this letter in hand, I returned to them and stopped the planned attack. I believe this decision was crucial in preventing the LTTE from being labelled a terrorist organization at



*The charred remains of the Jaffna Public Library, once a repository of 97,000 books and rare manuscripts. In a devastating act of cultural vandalism, the library was burned down by Sinhala mobs, allegedly with the tacit approval of the then ruling UNP government and its ministers.*



*Mrs. Ruba Nadaraja, the chief librarian of the Jaffna Public Library, sits devastated amidst the ruins the morning after the catastrophic fire. Surrounding her are library assistants, all mourning the loss of a cultural and educational cornerstone.*

that early stage internationally.

I prefer not to dwell on my militant days, as they bring me immense agony. However, reflecting on this incident, I realize there's a hint of satisfaction in knowing I prevented a massacre. It's comforting to realize that my actions helped avert a great calamity that could have befallen the Sri Lankan Tamil community.

## **What is your opinion about Karuna Amman, who was the Eastern Commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)?**

I saw Karuna only as Prabhakaran's bodyguard. If you are selected in Prabhakaran's bodyguard unit, chances are high that you will be promoted to the ranks of the LTTE. Looking back at the LTTE, it is clear that Prabhakaran prioritized loyalty over talent and merit. This is an everyday reality for anyone leading an organization in an authoritarian way. They have to protect their backs, and Prabhakaran is no exception.

Whenever I met Karuna in the 1980s, he would address me as 'Anton Anna,' If I am correct, Karuna was a third-batch trainee in Salem camp. At that time, I did not perceive him as particularly talented.

As for his revolt against LTTE leadership, his motives behind it, and the politics and rivalry between him and other LTTE leaders, I have no knowledge of what happened. Since I left/fired the LTTE, I have never looked back. I only see events here and there on social media or whenever people approach me.

## **What is your view on Rajiv Gandhi's murder?**



*The stone mosaic at the site of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in Sriperumbudur.*

I was not in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. I left a few years ago, in 1988. In my opinion, the killing was a big mistake and shameful.

Internationally, this massacre and other alleged terrorist activities by the LTTE became the primary reasons for the LTTE to be considered a terrorist organization. The killing of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leader Amirthalingam was also a significant error and unforgivable. An organization like the LTTE, which was an ethnic liberation movement, should never have indulged in such crimes.

I believe the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was an act of revenge orchestrated by Prabhakaran.

Prabhakaran was foolish to think that after assassinating a former Prime Minister of a nation like India, other countries would continue to support him. Such massacres, along with other senseless killings and misconduct by the LTTE, contributed to the transformation of the LTTE from a movement of freedom fighters to a widely condemned terrorist group.

By committing these murders, Prabhakaran not only diminished his status as a freedom fighter but also portrayed himself as a terrorist to the world. Similarly, the LTTE's image shifted from that of freedom fighters to a dreaded terrorist organization. Ultimately, it was the innocent LTTE fighters who paid the price for Prabhakaran's folly.

## Receiving arms from Premadasa's government

The LTTE's decision to receive arms from the then President of Sri Lanka, Premadasa, to fight against India – which had come to the aid of the Sri Lankan Tamil people – was profoundly misguided and unforgivable.

It's entirely indefensible for the Tigers, having engaged with the Sri Lankan government for their own survival and self-interest, then to accuse other liberation movements of being quislings for similar collaborations. If one were to adhere to this logic of labelling, then the LTTE and Prabhakaran should be deemed the foremost traitors for colluding with Premadasa's government. However, I don't subscribe to this simplistic labelling.

The inconsistency in the Tigers' stance is stark: they received substantial funds and arms from Premadasa to wage war against the Indian government, yet they vehemently criticized and killed leaders and members of other

movements for forming alliances with the Sri Lankan government, denouncing them as traitors. This approach is fundamentally flawed and epitomizes a double standard.

## What was your state of mind when Prabhakaran died in 2009?

I had been anticipating this downfall since 1988. It became clear to me back then that Prabhakaran, through his foolishness, would ultimately destroy himself and the LTTE. This was apparent to me when Prabhakaran rejected the interim government proposed by the Indian government and chose to wage war against it in 1988. However, I did not know when or where their end would come.

Therefore, when Prabhakaran died, and the LTTE was completely destroyed in 2009, I did not experience any particular emotion. However, the fact that Prabhakaran, through his recklessness, caused the deaths of thousands of innocent lives, including his own, is something that deeply saddens me.

He did not have the foresight to realize that there is no such straight-line road to Tamil Eelam, federalism, whatever. This would not have happened if he had known that there are many steps and paths to overcome during the process of achieving a freedom struggle.

Now, I see many moderate Tamil parties/leaders making the same mistakes. Their empty sentimental slogans and cinematic heroic populist speeches do not achieve anything. They do not want to use the 13th Amendment as a stepping stone. However, the same people fight tooth and nail with others for less powerful provincial councils who are still rejecting the 13th Amendment. This is a funny joke.



# Corruption at the Crossroads: Unveiling Injustice at the Vavuniya Passport Office



In the heart of Vavuniya, a concerning narrative unfolds daily at the local passport office, casting a long shadow over the integrity of public service institutions in Sri Lanka. Allegations of rampant bribery and corruption in the passport issuance process have surfaced, portraying a system deeply marred by inefficiency and injustice.

Every morning, before the crack of dawn, hopeful individuals from various districts of the Northern Province line up in two queues at the Vavuniya Passport Office. They come seeking what should be a straightforward service—the issuance of one-day or regular passports. However, the reality they encounter is far from simple or fair.



Reports indicate that a corrupt nexus between office staff, security personnel, and even police officers has turned a routine administrative process into a lucrative racket. Instead of a first-come, first-served basis, the standard procedure, numbers are allegedly sold to the highest bidders. Individuals who refuse or are unable to pay bribes up to and exceeding 5,000 rupees are often forced to wait for hours, only to leave empty-handed.

This system not only disenfranchises the average citizen but also erodes trust in public institutions. The passport office, meant to be a gateway to the world for Sri Lankans, has become a barrier littered with exploitation. The involvement of police in this scheme adds a layer of betrayal to the public's trust. Supposedly there to uphold the law, these officers are instead reported to be protecting and participating in corrupt practices, overseeing a daily exchange that privileges the wealthy and well-connected over ordinary citizens.

Following reports in the Jaffna Tamil media about corruption at the Vavuniya passport office, law enforcement has taken swift and much-needed action despite the alleged involvement of police officers in the corrupt practices. It is suggested that these crimes occurred with the tacit approval of some members of the police force. However, the growing media attention forced the police to act as though they were hearing of these corrupt practices for the first time. Consequently, police reported that six individuals were arrested in front of the passport office, signalling a public stance against the malpractice. Furthermore, Senior Police Inspector Jayathilaka of the Vavuniya Police Station's Crime Prevention Unit has issued a public notice. He urges citizens to report any suspicious activities by contacting him at his official phone number, 0718593520 if they witness further malpractices in the coming days.

## MONITOR MEMO

# Beware of Imitators: Sri Lanka's Immigration Department Warns Against Fake Visa Websites

The Department of Immigration and Emigration has issued a warning about the emergence of counterfeit websites that mimic the appearance of the newly launched online visa application portal, [www.srilankaevisa.lk](http://www.srilankaevisa.lk). These fraudulent sites have been deceiving people into making payments through them.

In a statement, the Department encourages everyone to ensure they are using the

official online visa application system by accessing the e-Visa link directly from [www.immigration.gov.lk](http://www.immigration.gov.lk). This precaution is to guarantee the security and authenticity of their visa applications.

The new online visa system, which was officially launched on April 17th, aims to streamline the application process for visitors and residents alike, enhancing the efficiency and security of immigration services.





# Chamari Athapaththu Storms Back to Top ICC Rankings with Record-Breaking Innings

By:  
**Our Sports  
Correspondent**

Chamari Athapaththu, Sri Lanka's formidable cricketing powerhouse, has reclaimed her position at the pinnacle of the ICC Women's ODI Batting Rankings following a historic innings. Athapaththu's unbeaten 195 against South Africa in Potchefstroom—an awe-inspiring display that marked her ninth ODI century—was instrumental in levelling the ICC Women's Championship Series at 1-1.

This record-breaking knock is now celebrated as the highest individual score in a successful run-chase in Women's ODI history, propelling her past England's all-rounder Natalie Sciver-Brunt to regain the top spot—a position she briefly held from July 3 to 12, 2023, before being surpassed by Beth Mooney and subsequently by Sciver-Brunt.



In that same series, former number one Laura Wolvaardt of South Africa showcased her batting brilliance with an unbeaten 184, propelling South Africa to a formidable 301 for five in the third ODI. This stellar performance elevated Wolvaardt two places to third in the batting rankings, highlighting the intense rivalry among the world's elite batters.

The series underscored individual excellence and illuminated the dynamic shifts within the ICC rankings. West Indies captain Hayley Matthews, also a captain-opener like Chamari, surged in both the batting and all-rounder rankings. Her remarkable double of 140 not out and three wickets for 17 runs in the series opener against Pakistan in Karachi propelled her seven places to 11th among batters and to second place among all-rounders.

Other players, too, ascended the rankings. Stafanie Taylor of the West Indies moved up two places to 18th, while Pakistan's Bismah Maroof edged up to 27th. In the bowling ranks, Pakistan's left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal

climbed six places to 17th after claiming three wickets in the first two matches against the West Indies. Similarly, West Indies' Connell ascended three spots to 25th, and teammate Chinelle Henry rose six places to 36th. Sri Lanka's Kavisha Dilhari and Pakistan's Umm-e-Hani also advanced significantly, moving up to 48th and 60th, respectively.

Chamari Athapaththu's prowess at the crease is not merely effective—it's a spectacle of strategic and skilful play that captivates audiences and intimidates opponents. Renowned for her aggressive batting style, Chamari masterfully blends traditional shots with innovative strokes. Her remarkable wrist work allows her to manoeuvre the ball deftly, exploiting gaps in densely packed field settings. Equally impressive is her footwork; Chamari effortlessly advances down the pitch, transforming well-pitched deliveries into scoring opportunities. Her performances not only demonstrate her technical acumen but also her thrilling approach to the game, solidifying her status as a cricketing legend.



# Sri Lanka Unveils Shree Ramayan Trails to Captivate Pilgrims and Tourists

*Adam's Bridge, the natural chain of limestone shoals stretching between India and Sri Lanka, capturing the serene and historic connection between the two nations.*

By: **Our Reporter**



Sri Lanka has formally launched the Shree Ramayan Trails project, an ambitious initiative designed to draw millions of Indian and international Hindu pilgrims, travellers, and tourists. This initiative connects various locales mentioned in the epic Ramayana, spotlighting nine sacred sites across Sri Lanka, from Adam's Bridge in the Mannar Basin to Seetha Eliya in Nuwara Eliya, each imbued with significant historical and religious importance from the ancient Hindu epic.

A collaborative effort between Sri Lanka and India, this project mirrors the deep cultural bonds between the two nations and aims to bolster Sri Lanka's tourism industry by offering tailored pilgrimages and travel experiences centred around these storied sites. The featured locations in the Ramayan Trails include:



*Seetha Eliya in Nuwara Eliya, a serene and picturesque location steeped in the lore of the Ramayana, where it is believed Sita was held captive by Ravana, adding a rich layer of mythological significance to the landscape.*

- **Adam's Bridge, Mannar Basin:** Celebrated as the mythological bridge constructed by Lord Rama's army.
- **Ravana's Cave, Ella:** Touted as the secret refuge where Ravana concealed Sita.
- **Ashok Vatika, Nuwara Eliya:** The serene garden where Sita was detained during her captivity.
- **Divurumpola Temple, Welimada:** Famous for the site of Sita's "Agni Pariksha," a test of her purity.
- **Ussangoda, Hambantota:** Noted for its connection to celestial phenomena subsequent to Hanuman's encounter with Sita.
- **Koneswaram Temple, Trincomalee:** An age-old Shiva temple that was visited by Lord Rama.
- **Manavari Temple, Chilaw:** Distinguished as the site of the first lingam installed by Rama.

- **Kataragama Temple, Kataragama:** A sacred site esteemed in both Buddhist and Hindu traditions.
- **Seetha Eliya, Nuwara Eliya:** Situated near Ashok Vatika, this site encompasses the revered Seetha Amman Temple.

The project integrates state-of-the-art technology to elevate the visitor experience, including virtual and augmented reality, to provide immersive storytelling and educational insights about the epic's connections to these revered locales.

This cultural and spiritual initiative is anticipated to significantly impact the recovery and expansion of Sri Lanka's tourism sector, presenting global travellers with a unique fusion of religious tourism and technological innovation.





# Sumanthiran Calls for Business Diaspora to Steer Clear of Politics



By: **T.Kathirgamanathan**

In a compelling public statement, M.A. Sumanthiran, a prominent member of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and parliamentarian for Jaffna, has made a poignant appeal to Tamil diaspora entrepreneurs. During a video interview with a Tamil online media platform, Sumanthiran, a key figure in the leadership dynamics of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), voiced significant concerns about the encroachment of financial interests into politics. He emphatically urged these business leaders to refrain from political engagements, highlighting the increasing anxieties about the role of

wealth in shaping political outcomes.

"Please withdraw from Tamil national politics," implored Sumanthiran in his statement. He emphasized that monetary dealings could potentially derail the Tamil people's journey toward liberation. He expressed that business activities and profit-making ventures should operate independently of national political interests.

During the interview, Sumanthiran responded to an incisive inquiry regarding whether any diaspora Tamil businessmen had broached the topic of financial contributions with him or his colleague Sritharan during their campaign for the leadership of the Tamil National Alliance. He described receiving an indirect proposal through a third party, which suggested that a political party was "for sale" and inquired about his interest. Sumanthiran emphasized that he never had direct contact with the businessman behind the message and could not reveal their identity.

The interaction highlights the complicated relationship between politics and business within the Tamil community, where significant influence is exerted by wealthy expatriates. "This is becoming a major issue today," Sumanthiran noted, pointing to instances in past parliamentary elections where external financial influences reportedly swayed opinions against him.

He recounted a specific communication from an influential figure holding a significant international position at the time, warning him about the infusion

of money into politics in the northern regions.

Sumanthiran's appeal to the diaspora to steer clear of political involvement highlights ongoing concerns about the impact of financial influence on governance and the potential complications it could bring to the Tamil community's pursuit of fairness and self-determination. As the Tamil community progresses politically, the interaction between diaspora wealth and local politics continues to be a topic of debate.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play, it is important to recognize that the concerns voiced by M.A. Sumanthiran about the influence of diaspora money in local politics are not confined to any single faction within the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) or Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK). These issues affect various political groups within the Tamil community, each influenced differently by their diaspora connections. For instance, the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) has often been criticized for aligning more closely with the interests of certain diaspora groups, which are seen as surrogates for the former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Critics argue that this alignment might prioritize the agenda of these diaspora groups over the immediate needs and aspirations of the local Tamil population in Sri Lanka. This underscores the complexity of diaspora influence across the spectrum of Tamil political parties, each of which may be swayed by external interests that do not always align with local priorities.





*A Sri Lankan Vedda man*

# New Genetic Insights Reveal Ancient Connections Between Sri Lanka's Vedda and Indian Tribes

Researchers from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad and the University of Colombo have revealed significant findings in a recent study that shed light on the genetic origins of the Vedda tribe, Sri Lanka's indigenous inhabitants. The study, published in the journal 'Mitochondrion', indicates a strong genetic link between the Vedda and certain tribal groups in India, potentially rewriting

the narrative of ethnic and cultural histories in South Asia.

The collaborative research analyzed DNA samples from 37 Vedda individuals to compare their genetic makeup with that of various tribal populations across India, including the Austroasiatic Munda-speaking Santhal and Juang tribes of Odisha, as well as the Dravidian-speaking Irula, Paniya, and Pallar tribes

from Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The findings show that the Vedda share a closer genetic connection with these Indian tribes than with Sri Lanka's Sinhalese or Tamil populations, despite centuries of geographic coexistence.

Gyaneshwer Chaubey, a population geneticist at Banaras Hindu University who supervised the study, expressed surprise at the results, highlighting that "Sri Lanka is an amazing place where three populations, living side by side, interacted very differently with one another." The research indicates that while the Sinhalese and Tamil populations have intermingled extensively, the Vedda have maintained their genetic and cultural distinctiveness with minimal mixing.

The implications of these findings are profound, suggesting that the Vedda's ancestors migrated from the Indian subcontinent around



55,000 years ago, much earlier than previously believed. This early migration supports the theory that modern humans moved out of Africa, through India, and into Asia, establishing one of the earliest known human settlements.

Anjana Welikala, a scientist at Colombo University and the study's first author pointed out the significance of these findings in understanding the unique demographic history of the Vedda. "The Vedda have long intrigued anthropologists, historians, and scientists because of their distinct language and culture. Our study unravels their genetic origins and affinities with Indian populations, emphasizing their role as direct descendants of the



*Juang tribes*

island's earliest inhabitants," Welikala explained.

The study also highlights the Vedda's linguistic uniqueness, with their language being one of the three linguistically isolated languages on the subcontinent. This linguistic

evidence, combined with genetic data, underscores the Vedda's long history of isolation and cultural preservation.

The scientific community has greeted the latest research with enthusiasm, as it provides fresh perspectives on the settlement of the Indian subcontinent and the intricate patterns of human migration. Additionally, this work prompts crucial discussions about the preservation of indigenous cultures in the context of increasing globalization. As Sri Lanka and India further explore their shared prehistoric heritage, the history of the Vedda people highlights the rich and varied narratives that inform our contemporary existence.



*Santhal woman*



# The Fall & the Rise;

## From Maligawatte to Mirpur, The Malinga- Kule redemption arc



By:

**Dr. Aravinthan  
Arunthavanathan**

Ten years ago, on the night of April 6th, Sri Lanka rejoiced like it had never done before. It was a night where, against all odds, Sri Lanka overcame India to win an elusive ICC title after numerous attempts. It would be unfair to consider it payback for that painful, dewy night in Mumbai in 2011, as the Limited Overs World Cup remains the king of all crowns. Yet, for a nation starved for ultimate recognition despite remarkable consistency in the shortest format, it was the ultimate high.

It was a kind of redemption for Sri Lanka in many ways. But this story isn't about Sri Lanka; it's about two men. You may think,





"Yes, we have heard it before—the last four overs, isn't it?" Yes, partially, but mostly no. It's about a redemption arc that went unnoticed amidst the unconventional heist those two men pulled off against the Bradmanesque Kohli, Dhoni, and Yuvraj—who are no lesser mortals by any means.

Yes, it's about Kulasekara and Malinga, but not what happened that night. On a similar, perhaps even bigger, night in October 2012,

all roads led to R Premadasa Stadium. Having beaten a strong Pakistan team, Sri Lanka began the match with almost one hand on the coveted, elusive title. By halfway through the first innings, it seemed like only a mere formality remained before Sri Lanka would erupt into roars of supremacy. In the meantime, a struggling Samuels hit a flat ball, which slipped out of Kulasekara's reliable hands. It sounded a bell because a similar drop had hurt Sri Lanka the year before.



One thought a repeat wasn't possible that night. But somehow, Marlon acted as if he had an account to settle with Malinga. It was an onslaught of intense aggression. Samuels tamed the beast in Malinga that night. Malinga was massacred. As Sri Lanka went to bed that night, hoping and praying what had unfolded was just a nightmarish dream, those two men would have known it came down to them. Nobody would point that out to Kulasekara, who was the most likeable, or Malinga, who has seen worse and proved himself over the years, but surely they might have wondered whether they would ever have a shot at glorious redemption, which both they and the team deserved.

Ten years ago, on that night in Mirpur, it had literally come down to them. Kohli was in a phase where it seemed he could dictate to the ball where he wanted it to go. Dhoni was Dhoni—unflappable, as always. Though out of touch, Yuvraj could never be dismissed as a potential game-changer. If Marlon could turn the tide, Yuvraj certainly would not be considered a spent force. Sri Lanka had performed well, but all that could have dissipated into thin air had the deathovers proceeded according to Kohli and Dhoni's prerogative.

In addition, Malinga grasped Kohli early on. It was now or never in every possible way for the duo and Sri Lanka.

What followed was unconventional brilliance and out-of-the-box thinking orchestrated by



audacity. The pinpoint precision with which the play was executed warrants it a place in the history books, and to date, the cricket world has rightly recognized it. But it was those two very men, who would have hit the pillow a few months earlier with heavy hearts and heavier heads, who orchestrated their own and the team's rightful redemption on a misty night against all odds.

That misty night in Mirpur was surely a crest in the chests of the whole squad. But for those two men, Kulasekara and Malinga, it was more than recognition. It was a validation of character and a living reminder that life will not remember you for how badly you fell, but for how strongly you rose again.

Kulasekara and Malinga will be remembered just for that on that mystical, misty night in Mirpur, which makes Sri Lanka smile even today.

They fell at Maligawatte and rose back in style in Mirpur. That's the magic of resilience.



# Black Cuckoo

Translated from the original Tamil short story *karuṅkuyil* (கருங்குயில்) by Shobasakthi

Translated by:  
**Eluttukkiniyavan**  
(எழுத்துக்கினியவன்)

Ravishaṅkar could not comprehend why white women tourists were falling over one another to kiss the outer wall around his house. It got a fresh coat of paint just three months ago. Now, he could count at least a hundred lipstick marks. Perhaps it could have had a certain kind of beauty had they been all of the same color. But the lipstick marks came in all colors, red, purple, green, black, and so on, making the wall look like an ugly pockmarked face of someone who was afflicted with the monkeypox. As if this were not enough, some even left little notes on cards or scraps of paper on top of the wall. When

Ravishaṅkar quizzed his eighty-year-old father, he responded somewhat indifferently, “What can I do son? I have tried my best to chase the white people away. But when I doze off for a bit, they manage to do their dirty deed. Some even tried to enter the house. Your mother and I close the door and stay indoors. We were waiting for you to return. Cursed Colombo.” There was a tinge of irritation in his voice that their son was using him and the old woman as unpaid guards for the house.

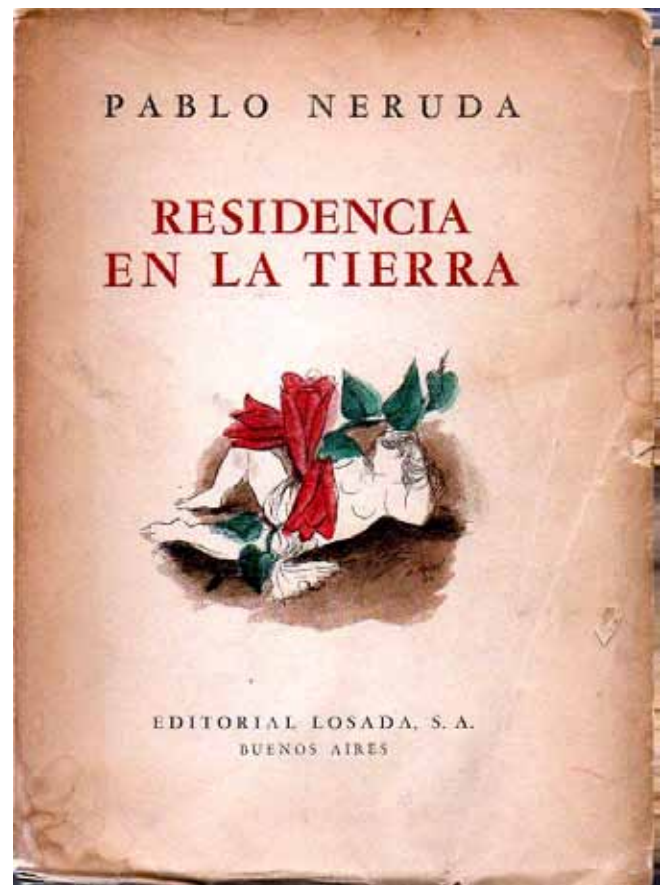
Ravishaṅkar was the owner of seven or eight gas stations in London. As soon as he saw



an advertisement on some website that in the Wellawatte area of the city of Colombo, house number 56 on the 42nd Lane was for sale, he snapped it up cheaply. Back then, it was a dilapidated house in ruins. He poured his London pounds to renovate the house to make it into a crystal palace. He had repaired the outer wall, whitewashed it, and installed a piece of marble in it with the word “Ravi Villa” embossed in gold lettering. Before he returned to London, he forced his parents, who were living a relaxed life in the village of Puliyañgūdal, to move to the new house in Wellawatte. But when he returned three months later, he was confronted with this situation.

Had he realized that all these kisses and notes were intended for the name that was printed in yellow on a small piece of wood shaped like a black cuckoo hanging on the same wall ninety odd years ago, the wall that bore the name Ravi Villa now, things could have been different. His fantastic business brain would have sold the house at ten times the purchase price. This was the house that a great poet had rented for two years in 1929. The poet, who at twenty had dazzled the world with a collection of poetry titled ‘Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair,’ was twenty-five when he moved into this house. He was an official at the Chilean consulate. He wrote much of his celebrated book of poetry, ‘*Residencia en la tierra*,’ in the west room of this house, sitting in front of the windows that looked out towards the Laccadive Sea.

It was the black cuckoo hanging at the entrance that helped Sampañki identify the house at first. Her father Muththān had repeated everything about this house many times over. She should go there at the first light of dawn. How should she enter the yard? If she would noiselessly open the iron grill gate next to the hanging black cuckoo to enter the yard, she would see a footpath to the left



of the house in the midst of croton bushes. If she walked along that path, she would come to the wooden toilet which was set apart some distance from the house. There, she should remove the iron bucket fitted under the hole in the toilet floor and empty it into the sea a short distance away. She should then rinse the bucket in the sea and put the bucket back into its slot in the toilet. She should do all this with lightning speed. There was a tin can next to the toilet door. Sometimes, there would be some coins left inside the can as the fee. Sampañki should carefully secure the coins within a knot in her sārī without losing them.

After all, when Sampañki was a little girl, she did accompany her mother Kandhammā when she went out to work. Yet, Muththān kept repeating his instructions.

“You must not forget any of these instructions. Most importantly, if you happen to see the white master of that house, you must greet him by saying, ‘Good morning;’ Sampañki, let’s hear you say it out loud: “Good morning.”

Sampanki just nodded her head. She hardly opened her mouth to speak.

In course of time, Sampanki's parents had come to realize that she was born with a mental handicap. They had hoped that it was because of a divine curse and that it would be lifted someday. Kandhammā kept on lamenting to the gods. Cholera took away the three children that followed Sampanki even before they were weaned. Kandhammā had vowed that if her only remaining child got her intellect straightened out, she would throw salt and pepper as offering to the Poṇṇiamman temple. She bought a small silver tongue from Kochikadē St. Anthony's shrine and left it as an offering by the shrine's doorstep. She went into the Dutch canal by herself to pluck white lotus flowers and left them in front of the Mahābōdhi vihāra as her offering.

Sampanki's handicap remained through all of these seventeen years. Even worse, as she grew older, she became increasingly forgetful. She even forgot important matters quickly. Her neighbors teasingly called her a 'skink' because of the seemingly forgetful nature of that lizard-like animal. The deficiencies meant that finding a husband for her was being delayed, too. Muththān's buddy Kēsavayyā had been dropping hints to Muththān that he would be interested in marrying Sampanki. But Muththān did not want to give away his daughter to that widower and drunkard. Her mother, who was beseeching and lamenting to gods asking them to cure Sampanki had now graduated to questioning and cursing the gods. If there was a human sound emanating from their hut, it was surely Kandhammā cursing the gods out.

Sampanki did not like to talk to anyone. She preferred solitude. She did not care at all that a husband had not been found for her. Of all the things in this world, she loved the sea. When she was small, she had heard her

grandmother say, "I saw the sea for the first time when I boarded the ship to Ceylon." She had worried about how it was possible for a place without the sea to exist. Most of her time was spent alone on the seashore. There was a large ship that had beached. They say that it was a Dutch warship from a hundred years prior. Birds descend on that ship in a myriad of configurations: helixes, towers, and flowers in blossom. When they fly off again, they form yet another magical arrangement. Once she even saw a group of black birds rising off the ship in the shape of an elephant. She never tired of watching those avian illusions, eyes wide with wonder.

Sampanki always walked slowly. When she sat down to eat, it would take her an hour to consume a coconut shell worth of porridge, constantly blowing on it to cool it down. She did everything in slow motion. She had only one sārī. Someone had given that tattered red sārī with a golden border as wages to Kandhammā. She spent an hour every day washing that sārī with neem seed powder. She would spread it out on the sand to dry and walk around it to make sure that she had washed it properly. Even when she was washing a pot, she would rub it with wood ash until it shone. She would hold it up at eye level to admire her handiwork. Even though she was slow, she was thorough and correct in everything she did.

Their seaside hut was part of a government colony at Bambalawatte for sanitary workers. There were around twenty huts on the bank of the Dutch canal where it merged with the sea. When the tin roof became unbearably hot in the sun, the ground beneath it was soggy and muddy. During the rainy season, the Dutch canal would overflow and flood the huts. The workers in this little colony were responsible for removing the toilet waste from all the houses within a five-mile radius. They swept the streets. They removed pets when they





died. Men and married women went to work. Unmarried women were never sent out to work. But Sampañki was compelled to go to the black cuckoo house.

On Kēsavayyā's insistence, Muththān had a little too much to drink in Company Roads, formerly known as Slave Island. By midday, he had fallen ill. The drink called *kaṭṭukkampi* or tie wire was just pure distilled alcohol. Kēsavayyā's habit was to squeeze lemon juice into it. Something must have gone wrong with the distilled alcohol. Muththān collapsed onto the sand. His blood was escaping his body through his mouth and stomach like rice water. He could not even stand up straight. In the mornings, he needed to empty the toilet-bucket waste from six houses, collect the waste from them into a tin bucket, carry it on his head, and empty it into the sea. His

customers would not tolerate even a day's absence. They would immediately find a replacement worker. It was in this backdrop that they planned for Kandhammā to go to the five houses in Colpetty. She must finish work in these five houses and then rush off to the houses in Cinnamon Gardens that were her regular customers. Sampañki would therefore need to go to the only remaining customer in the opposite direction, in Wellawatte. It was a fact that this family could not afford to forgo the income of even half a cent.

The family decided to keep it a secret that Sampañki had to go out to work. There would be talk and ridicule from the neighbors if they learned that an unmarried woman was sent out to work. Finding her a husband would become even more difficult. That night, Sampañki could barely sleep, worrying about

not forgetting any of the instructions that her father kept repeating.

Early next morning, before it was light, Sampañki covertly left the colony and walked slowly along the seashore towards the specified landmarks. She usually walked on the wet sand, planting each step firmly and fiddling with the sand with each step. She was tall and slim. There was not an ounce of excess fat in her body. She had worn her long hair into a bun on the top of her head, making her look even taller. She had copper bangles in each arm. Above the thick lips that concealed her beautiful buck teeth on either side of her mouth, her red glass nose studs on each nostril shone like tiny flames. Kandhammā never tired of asserting that Sampañki was the prettiest woman in the whole colony and the one with the fairest skin. She said, “When she eats black plums, your eyes can see the black juice going down her throat.”

The black cuckoo house was not far from Sampañki’s colony. If one headed southward along the seashore from Bambalawatte, they could arrive within fifteen minutes. But Sampañki’s slow gait required thirty minutes. She walked with hesitation. Muththān had said, “There is a lazy dog in that house Sampañki. You are scared of even cats, Sampañki. That dog will not even sniff you. It will be dozing off by the entrance.” But anxiety still lurked in a corner of Sampañki’s mind.

She walked slowly, murmuring the directions that Muththān had drummed into her head. As she passed the Darmashān̄thi *vihāra*, there was the *coco de mer* tree. As Sampañki took the sand road opposite that tree, heading eastwards, dawn was complete. Amidst the wild growth of shrubbery and bushes, stood the new, tall, white house. The black cuckoo was hanging to the right of the iron grill gate on the outer wall. Sampañki hesitated for a

few minutes, staring at the black cuckoo. The house lay still. She peeked through the iron grill gate. Just as Muththān had said, the lazy dog was curled up by the front entrance.

Sampañki pushed the iron grill gate gently and it opened noiselessly. She had now forgotten whether Muththān had told her to turn left or right. As she crossed the gate and stepped into the yard, the dog raised its head, and she turned hers. On the left, between the newly planted croton plants, the footpath was visible. She walked along the footpath. She circled the house and walked towards the outdoor toilet without making a sound. The toilet door was open. A pretty white woman was squatting on the toilet, stark naked.

Sampañki froze. She had no idea what she should do next. She could do nothing but lower her eyes. Her legs froze. The white woman squatted there staring at Sampañki with her blue eyes. Her hand was moving behind her. Suddenly, she jumped up, screamed, and ran towards the house, still naked.

Sampañki felt that she was really going to faint. The white woman’s urine bubbled up around the toilet bowl. The bucket was full of excrement and rags. Just as Muththān had said, the lid for the bucket was hanging from the outer wall of the toilet. She closed the bucket lid tightly, lifted the bucket onto her head and started walking towards the seashore. As she walked, she picked up a tiny acorn-like withered baby coconut from the ground with her toes, lifted her foot up to her left hand so that she could grasp the baby coconut with it. She squatted at the water’s edge and emptied the bucket into the sea. Then she waded into the water up to her knee and scrubbed the bucket clean with the dried baby coconut and rinsed it. She was afraid to go back to the house. She imagined the naked white woman to be a *mōhiṇi* ghost. With her eyes lowered,





she walked back to the house and inserted the bucket into its slot. Only then did she notice the small tin can by the toilet door. She had forgotten all about it. She lifted it up. It was empty.

Sampañki returned to Bambalawatte. She took a long relaxing bath in the sea and was walking back to the hut in a wet sārī when she noticed Kandhammā returning after work, carrying a cassava tuber in her hand. In that hut, they did not have the habit of making breakfast. That day, the cassava would be the lunch for the mother and daughter, and a bit of salted porridge for the unwell Muththān. “Was there money in the tin can?” asked Kandhammā. Sampañki shook her head. When Kandhammā repeated, “Remember well! Was there money in the can?” Sampañki shook her head again.

When Sampañki went to the black cuckoo house on the third day, a young woman with East Asian features sat on the steps smoking a cigar. She stared intently at Sampañki. She was wearing a white full-sleeved shirt and a sarong that looked like a rainbow.

When Sampañki went around to the back of the house with her eyes cast downwards, she could hear the rustling of leaves. When Sampañki proceeded to the toilet without turning her head, the rustling stopped. When she closed the toilet bucket, that woman took a copper coin and tossed on the ground in front of Sampañki who picked it up and tied into a knot on her sārī, lifted the bucket to her head and started walking. When Sampañki went to the black cuckoo house the next day, that woman was no longer there.

In the following days, Sampañki saw several different types of women at the black cuckoo house. One day, as Sampañki entered, a white woman, a Malay woman, and a Ceylonese woman emerged from the house giggling, with drunkenness in their eyes, and started walking towards the beach. When Sampañki went to empty the toilet bucket they were standing on one leg, facing eastwards, with their hands brought together above their heads in worship.

On the ninth day, when Sampañki went to the black cuckoo house, the front window was open. Inside, a young white man kept

staring at her with wide eyes. Sampañki lowered her eyes and walked towards the toilet. When she returned with the toilet bucket on her head, he was sitting at the doorstep with a book in his hand. He was handsome and well-built, wearing only short pants. When Sampañki returned with the empty bucket, he stood holding the iron grill gate, looking at Sampañki with a smile. When Sampañki approached, he touched the piece of wood in the shape of a black cuckoo and said something. Sampañki was stunned. Not knowing what she should do, she stood rooted to the spot. She had completely forgotten that Muththān repeatedly said, “If you see the master of the house, you must say ‘Good morning.’” The white man started walking towards the sea, singing aloud.

The next day, when Sampañki went to the black cuckoo house, the white man was standing by the back entrance in semi darkness. He was wearing a gown that reached down to his knees, and a mischievous smile. There was a strange sound coming from within his gown. She had never heard such a sound before. When she approached the toilet, she noticed that the tin can was full of coins. She secured all the coins into a knot on her sārī. He stood there watching her until she left with the toilet bucket. When Sampañki laid all the coins on the mat before Muththān, he said, “White people are like this. If they like our work, they reward us well.”

The next day, he was waiting at the same place when Sampañki showed up. When she approached the toilet door, she saw that there were some glass bangles in the tin can. She kneeled on the ground and put the bangles on both hands. Then, she lifted the toilet bucket and left without looking up.

The next day again, he was waiting by the back entrance. As she walked towards the

toilet, he said, softly, “Hey, hey.” When Sampañki raised her eyes to look at him, he put his right hand forward. He had a new green sārī in his hand. He smiled and signaled with the sārī for her to come near him. Her feet refused to move. He left the sārī at the doorstep and went into the house. Sampañki walked slowly with her eyes cast downwards and took the sārī. When she showed it to Kandhammā, she said, “Keep it safely. You can wear it for your wedding.”

The next day when she went to the black cuckoo house, her heart was overflowing with gratitude. As she walked towards the toilet, she heard leaves rustle behind her. When she turned, the young man was standing very close to her. He looked into her eyes, and gently grabbed her right wrist. Sampañki felt that her blood dried and turned into water. She tried to extricate herself from his grasp. Now, as his grip tightened, droplets of tears formed in her eyes and fell on her cheeks. He dragged her into the house through the open back entrance. Her legs felt like wooden blocks. He carried her like a doll. She curled her mouth and sobbed silently. He now lifted her with his strong arms and laid her down in the middle of the rope bed. Sampañki was sure that he was going to kill her. Afraid to face death, she shut her eyes tightly. She then felt her golden-bordered sārī being whipped away from her body. Her hands instinctively tried to cover her nakedness.

He knocked her hands away roughly. When he collapsed on top of her, Sampañki felt as if death itself was descending on her. She remembered the *mōhiṇi* ghost she met on her first day at this house. The thought of whether the ghost had now taken male form now pervaded her entire being and terrorized her. The weight of his body suffocated her. The hot breath that hissed out of his nostrils burned her skin. She shook, imagining that the ghost had



opened its fiery eyes.

His one hand grabbed her hair that was plaited into a bun on the top of her head, while the other tried to force her eyelids open. She resolved not to look into the eyes of death under any circumstances and shut her eyes tightly. He stood up from her and whistled softly. A return whistle came from somewhere. Something moved from the base of her stomach towards her eyes, while making a noise. As Sampañki thought that her life force was leaving her body via her eyes, they opened by themselves. A small animal was sniffing her face. He commanded it by shouting, “Kiria, Kiria,” and the mongoose jumped to the part of her body he pointed to. Terrified, Sampañki lay still like a corpse. Thereafter, she could not close her eyes.

When Kandhammā returned from work, Muththān was sitting outside the hut. He looked at Kandhammā and turned his head towards the wood-fired stove inside. There, Sampañki lay curled up, with her head among the ashes. Shocked, Kandhammā ran inside and knelt beside her daughter and turned her face. Sampañki’s eyes were wide open. “It hurts, āyi,” Sampañki moaned. When Kandhammā asked, “Where does it hurt?” she pointed to her lower belly. With shaking hands, Kandhammā lifted Sampañki’s sārī and saw that her vagina was bleeding.

At midday the next day, Muththān came out of the hut when he heard someone call him aloud, “Muththān,... Muththān.” Bhrampy, who was also known as ‘*kaḷu mahaththayā*,’ because of his dark complexion and long limbs, was standing outside. He did the cooking and chores at the black cuckoo house from midday till evening. He was the one who had come earlier to Bambalawatte to talk to Muththān and employ him at the black cuckoo house.

“Muththān, why didn’t anyone come to empty the toilet bucket in the morning? Am I supposed to empty it myself?”

“I am not well, *kaḷu mahaththayā*... it was just yesterday that I was finally able to stand up from the mat and walk about...”

“The master said a girl had been coming to work during the past few days...”

“Her wedding has been fixed for tomorrow *kaḷu mahaththayā*. Our Kēsavayyā has taken pity on our mentally handicapped daughter and is going to marry her.”

After Bhrampy went back, Kandhammā came out of the hut and sat down on the sand. Muththān sat down in front of her. Kandhammā brought her face close to his and said in a low voice:

“Kēsavayyā will buy new clothes for the wedding, won’t he? Even if he doesn’t, Sampañki has a new sārī.”

“The sārī that the *paraṅgi* gave her? Burn it! How much would she suffer each time she sees that sārī!”

Kandhammā was quiet for a while. She turned her head to the left to look at the hut. Then she turned her head to the right to look at the sea, and said, “The merciful God has blessed my daughter with forgetfulness. She will forget everything soon. In course of time, everyone will have forgotten everything.”

But the white poet in the black cuckoo house did not forget it. In the four-hundred-page autobiography titled ‘Memoirs, by Pablo Neruda,’ published exactly forty-three years after he left Sri Lanka with his pet mongoose Kiria, he had allocated one page for Sampañki.

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