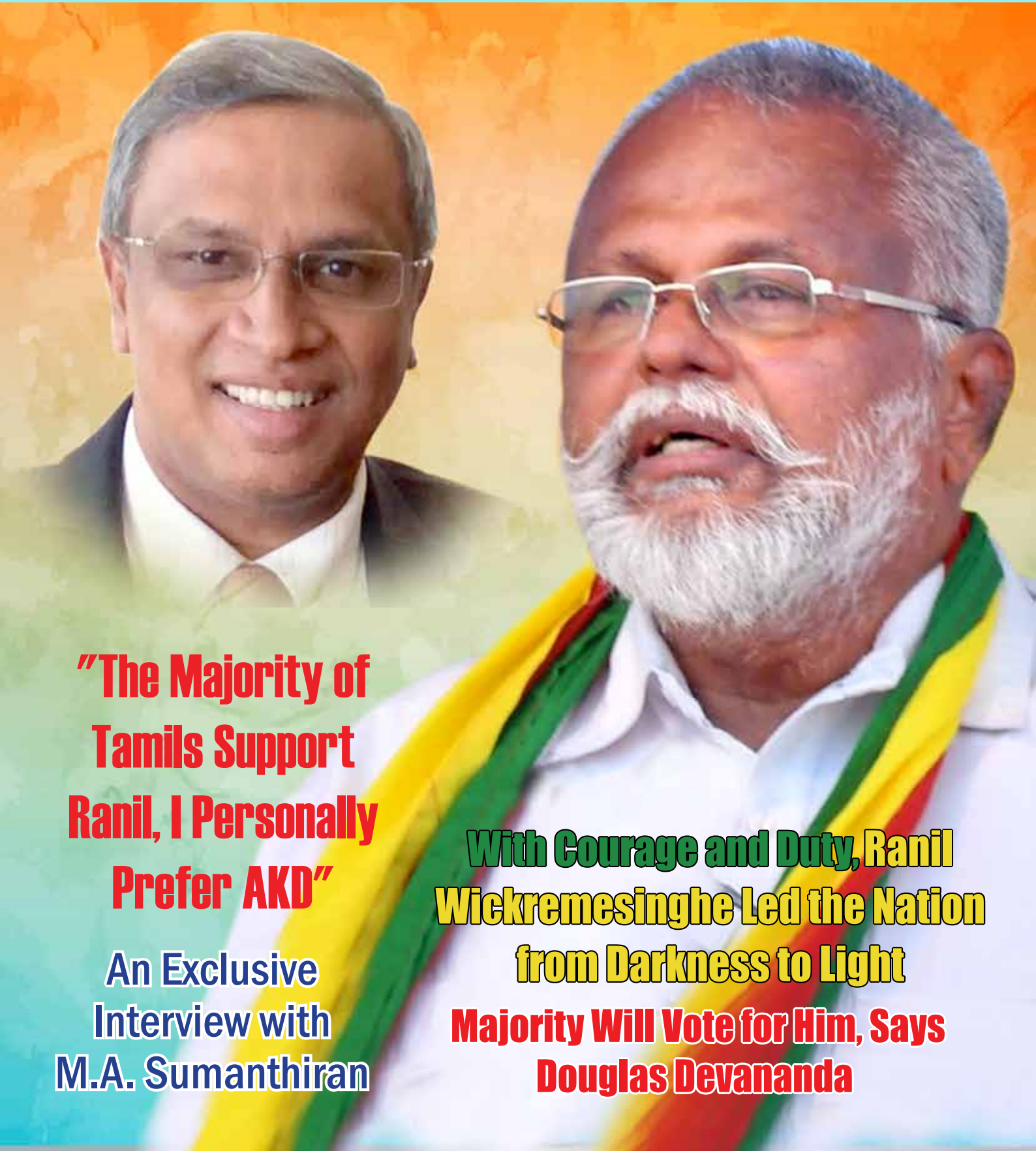


FORTNIGHTLY EDITION  
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# Jaffna monitor

UNAFRAID AND UNBOWED

September 15, 2024



**"The Majority of  
Tamils Support  
Ranil, I Personally  
Prefer AKD"**

**An Exclusive  
Interview with  
M.A. Sumanthiran**

**With Courage and Duty, Ranil  
Wickremesinghe Led the Nation  
from Darkness to Light**

**Majority Will Vote for Him, Says  
Douglas Devananda**



# Monitor's Map

03

Editorial

05

Mavai Greet Ranil:  
Politics Served with a  
Side of Tradition!

07

Charles Nirmalanathan's  
Viral Video Lifts the Lid  
on Tamil Leaders' Secret  
Political Deals

08

Election Commission  
Derecognizes Chandra  
kumar's Samaththuva  
Kadchi; Appeal Also  
Rejected, Says Commission

11

B.P.C. Kularatne,  
Additional Election  
Commissioner, on  
Samaththuva Kadchi's  
Derecognition and  
Rejection of Appeal

12

India Calls for Full  
Implementation of  
13th Amendment and  
Provincial Council  
Elections in Sri Lanka

13

With Courage  
and Duty, Ranil  
Wickremesinghe  
Led the Nation from

22

Common Candidate,  
Uncommon Blunder:  
EPRLF Senior in Hot  
Water After Facebook  
Ballot Fiasco

23

Sritharan's Strategy: No  
Matter What Happens, It's  
a Win for Tamil Politics-  
According to Him

25

"The Majority of  
Tamils Support Ranil, I  
Personally Prefer AKD"  
An Exclusive Interview  
with M.A. Sumanthiran

34

Ex-Combatants Welfare  
Leader Impregnates  
Prominent Female  
Functionary's Daughter,  
Now Faces Rape  
Allegations

38

Sumanthiran and Others  
Will Do Anything for  
Power, Says Presidential  
Candidate Battaramulle  
Seelarathana Thero

40

Dr. Manonmani  
Shanmugadas Joins the  
Legacy of Thirukkural  
Commentators with  
Groundbreaking Work

42

Unconditional Love for  
Sajith? Angajan Calls  
Out ITAK's 'No Strings  
Attached' Politics

44

Ensuring Your Vote  
Counts: The Power of  
Second Preference in the  
2024 Election

48

A Dying Child, A Silent  
Crowd: Can We Really  
Expect System Change?

50

JVP Has No Right to  
Seek Votes in the North:  
SJB

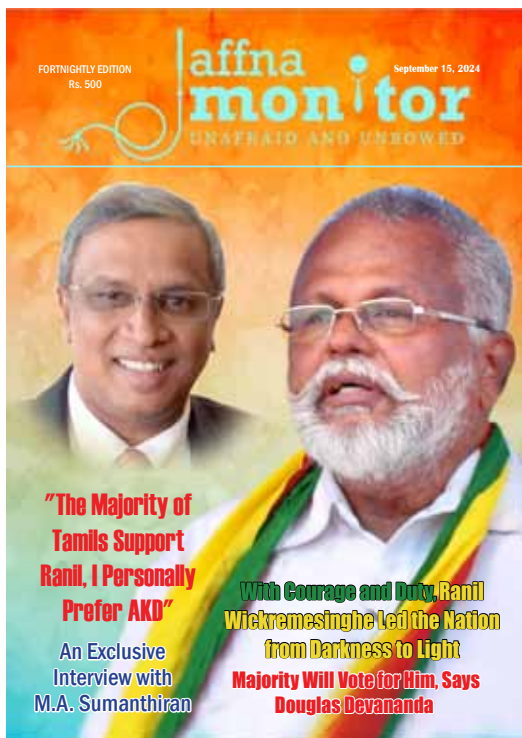
51

A confluence of "what  
it could have been" and  
"what would this be"

55

story- Our Intoxication

# Election 2024: Voices from Tamil Politics as the Nation Prepares to Vote



Dear Readers,

As Sri Lanka stands at the cusp of a decisive presidential election on September 21st, the nation's political future hangs in precarious uncertainty. This election has the potential to radically alter the country's trajectory, but it remains unclear whether it will dismantle entrenched power structures that have dominated for decades or if the electorate will prioritize stability and economic recovery.

For the first time, three formidable contenders-Ranil Wickremesinghe, Sajith Premadasa, and Anura Kumara Dissanayake-are vying for the presidency. With less than a week remaining, no clear frontrunner has emerged, leaving the outcome a matter of intense speculation. The nation's future now rests in the hands of its voters.

In this issue, we bring you exclusive interviews with two prominent figures in Tamil politics, each backing a different presidential candidate. Minister Douglas Devananda, who reached an unparalleled milestone-30 years of uninterrupted parliamentary service on August 17th, a record no Tamil politician has matched-gave us an incisive, no-holds-barred interview. A staunch ally of incumbent and independent presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe, Devananda passionately advocates for continued leadership under Wickremesinghe. Drawing from the depth of his decades-long political journey, he underscores his unwavering commitment to stability and progress amidst the turbulence facing Sri Lanka today.

On the opposing side, we spoke with M.A. Sumanthiran, a formidable and astute lawyer who now serves as an MP for the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK). Sumanthiran and his party have thrown their support behind Sajith Premadasa of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB).

In our interview, conducted just days before ITAK's official endorsement of Premadasa, Sumanthiran delved into the critical issues facing the Tamil people. His insights were as precise as his legal arguments. Yet, following ITAK's formal backing of Premadasa, our repeated attempts to follow up with Sumanthiran for updated perspectives were met with silence—calls went unanswered, and messages were ignored. We do not believe in creating controversy through our interviews, and if the interview with Sumanthiran stirs debate, we stand firm in knowing we have upheld our responsibility to provide honest, balanced reporting.

Both interviews presented here are the first of a two-part series, with the second instalment set to follow in our next edition. These discussions offer deep insights into the differing visions of these two key leaders and their chosen paths, reflecting the broader political dynamics at play.

As the presidential election on September 21st draws near, we urge every reader to exercise their right to vote. Your vote is your voice, your power to decide the direction of this nation. Cast your ballot for whomever you believe is best suited to lead, but make sure you make that choice. Sitting on the sidelines is not an option—if you don't vote, you forfeit the right to complain about the outcome. Take control, make it count, and let your voice be heard on the 21st!

Warm regards,

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



# ITAK's Twist: Party President Mavai Backs Ranil, Despite Official Support for Sajith



*Mavai Senathirajah greeting President Ranil Wickremesinghe at his home in a traditional Tamil manner.*

While the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) Central Committee had officially thrown its weight behind Sajith Premadasa, and Sritharan—embroiled in a heated leadership struggle—rallied behind the so-called common Tamil candidate, Mavai Senathirajah, who had initially leaned towards supporting the common Tamil candidate, decided to stir things up by siding with

President Ranil Wickremesinghe. In a twist straight out of a political thriller, Senathirajah didn't just back Wickremesinghe; he placed the Tamil ethnic question squarely on the President's agenda.

During a high-profile meeting at his residence in Tellippalai, Jaffna, Mavai spared no effort in the pomp and ceremony. Wickremesinghe

was welcomed with all the grandeur of a traditional Hindu reception. But this wasn't your typical handshake-and-smile photo op—beneath the rituals, the two were all business. Mavai made it crystal clear: "This isn't just about the election. Wickremesinghe's victory is about solving the ethnic issue that has haunted the Tamil community for decades."

And in a bold move, Mavai set a timeline: "Within three months, Ranil must deliver a political solution—no more symbolic gestures. It's time for leadership that unites Sri Lanka."

If you thought that was the height of the drama, think again. The next day, the political soap opera continued when more ITAK leaders—including Sashikala Raviraj—appeared at Wickremesinghe's side in Jaffna. Along with Mayuran, Sudarshan, Mavai's son Kalaiamuthan, and Akilan Muthukumarsamy, they submitted a formal proposal to establish Chavakachcheri as a separate divisional secretariat—a long-standing demand aimed at improving local governance. Sashikala proudly hailed this as a game-changer for Tamil areas.

But here's where the plot thickens. Credible sources say that Sritharan, the fiery ITAK MP known for his staunch Tamil nationalist stance, had been invited to meet Wickremesinghe at Mavai's home. At first, Sritharan agreed and even drove toward the meeting, but the sight of journalists and photographers outside sent him into a full-blown panic. After all, how could a hardline Tamil nationalist, who had



*Mavai Senathirajah with President Ranil Wickremesinghe at his home in Tellipalai*



*S. Sritharan*



*ITAK MP Charles Nirmalanathan*

hosted numerous fundraisers abroad for the common Tamil candidate, be caught rubbing elbows with the Sinhala President? In a move fit for a spy thriller, Sritharan swerved at the last minute, hiding in a nearby lane to avoid the cameras.

But the intrigue didn't end there. According to insiders, President Ranil Wickremesinghe reportedly had a private phone conversation with Sritharan and Mannar ITAK MP Charles Nirmalanathan—right from the house of TNA leader Mavai Senathirajah.

A source close to the development told Jaffna Monitor that during the conversation, the MPs reassured Wickremesinghe, saying, "Iyo sir, we are with you. What we do outside is just acting."

# Charles Nirmalanathan's Viral Video Lifts the Lid on Tamil Leaders' Secret Political Deals



*Charles Nirmalanathan*



BY:

## **Our Reporter**

A viral video featuring Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) MP Charles Nirmalanathan has sparked a political firestorm across social media. In the clip, Nirmalanathan casually brags about his close ties with President Ranil Wickremesinghe and even hints at the possibility of becoming Sri Lanka's next Finance Minister—a statement that has turned heads, raised eyebrows, and fueled some good-natured chuckles in political circles.

The video has quickly become a hot topic of discussion, spreading faster than a politician's campaign promise. With a tone of remarkable confidence, Nirmalanathan can be heard suggesting that his connections might soon lead him to control the nation's finances.

Political observers were quick to jump on the revelations, with one noting, "This video isn't just about Charles' ambitions. It shines a spotlight on the well-known but often unspoken deals between Tamil nationalist leaders and their Sinhala counterparts."

However, seasoned political watchers and the general public alike aren't particularly surprised by the content of the video. As one

observer noted, "Even a child knows these secret relationships exist between Tamil nationalist politicians and successive governments. It's no mystery—this has been going on for years."

Many Tamil politicians, despite publicly positioning themselves as defenders of Tamil nationalism, have long maintained clandestine relationships with government officials. From liquor licenses to other lucrative deals, these personal benefits are an open secret. "If anyone steps out of line or fails to deliver on their end of the bargain, the government often retaliates by leaking evidence of these relationships," the observer added. "This video of Charles Nirmalanathan could be just that—a subtle warning shot."

The release of this video has set tongues wagging, with comparisons being made to previous cases where MPs, publicly hailed as guardians of Tamil nationalism, were later exposed for their secret deals with the government. "For those who've profited personally by playing both sides in the political arena, this could be a bitter pill to swallow," another observer noted. "And this might just be the beginning—more skeletons could tumble out of closets soon."



# Election Commission Derecognizes Chandrakumar's Samaththuva Kadchi; Appeal Also Rejected, Says Commission



*SJB's presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa with now-derecognized Samaththuva Kadchi's General Secretary Chandrakumar at the latter's party office in Kilinochchi, following the announcement of their support for Premadasa.*



by:

**Our Special Correspondent**

The Election Commission has officially derecognized Samaththuva Kadchi, a Tamil political party led by Murugesu Chandrakumar, a former Member of Parliament for the Jaffna-Kilinochchi district. Chandrakumar previously represented the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) from 1994 to 2000 and again from 2010 to 2015.





Chandrakumar

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 No. 2399/14 - MONDAY, AUGUST 26, 2024

(Published by Authority)

**PART I : SECTION (I) — GENERAL**

**Government Notifications**

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS - 2024**

Notice under Section 27A of the Local Authorities Elections Ordinance (Chapter 262)

- 70. Communist Party of Sri Lanka
- 71. Social Democratic Party of Sri Lanka
- 72. Socialist Party of Sri Lanka
- 73. Samagi Jana Balawegaya
- 74. Samaththuwa Kadchi
- 75. Samabima Party
- 76. Socialist Peoples Forum
- 77. Socialist Equality Party
- 78. Sinhaladeepa Jathika Peramuna

*Samaththuwa Kadchi, included in Government Gazette No. 2395/08 under Section 7(4)(b) of the Parliamentary Elections Act, No. 01 of 1981, released on Monday, July 29, 2024.*

According to sources from the Election Commission, the party's appeal was also rejected, as there is no provision in Sri Lanka for appealing the deregistration of a political party once it has been officially revoked. They can only reapply as a new party, and Election Commission officers indicated to Jaffna Monitor that there is a high chance they may lose their election symbol.

Three years ago, Samaththuwa Kadchi was recognized as a political party. However, Election Commission officers indicate that the party failed to submit its financial reports for the year 2023. Despite receiving several reminders from the Commission, the party did not comply, leading to its derecognition.

While speaking with Jaffna



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The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka  
EXTRAORDINARY

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(Published by Authority)

**PART I : SECTION (I) — GENERAL**

**Government Notifications**

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ACT, No. 01 OF 1981

Notice under Section 7(4)(b)

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72. Socialist Party of Sri Lanka
73. Samagi Jana Balawegaya
74. Samabima Party
75. Socialist People's Forum
76. Socialist Equality Party
77. Sinhaladeepa Jathika Peramuna

*In Gazette No. 2399/14, published on August 26, 2024, under Section 27A of the Local Authorities Elections Ordinance, Samaththuwa Kadchi was removed from the list of recognized political parties.*

Monitor, the Chairman of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, RMAL Rathnayake, stated, 'Samaththuwa Kadchi failed to submit its audit report for the previous year. As a result, we have deregistered the party. However, they may apply again when we open applications for new parties in the future.

Samaththuwa Kadchi was included in the Government Gazette No. 2395/08, released on Monday, July 29, 2024, under Section 7(4)(b) of the Parliamentary Elections Act, No. 01 of 1981. The notice listed recognized political parties for the upcoming Presidential Election, and Samaththuwa Kadchi was among them.



*RMAL Rathnayake, Chairman of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka.*

However, in the updated Gazette No. 2399/14, published on Monday, August 26, 2024, under Section 27A of the Local Authorities Elections Ordinance (Chapter 262), following the announcement of the Embilipitiya local council elections, Samaththuwa Kadchi was removed from the list of recognized political parties.

The party with the shield as its official symbol is now officially derecognized and can no longer contest elections under its name or symbol. Interestingly, just weeks before the Presidential Election, Chandrakumar's Samaththuwa Kadchi had declared its support for Sajith Premadasa, the presidential candidate of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (United People's Power).

# B.P.C. Kularatne, Additional Election Commissioner, on Samaththuwa Kadchi's Deregognition and Rejection of Appeal

Jaffna Monitor spoke with Mr. B.P.C. Kularatne, Additional Election Commissioner (Legal and Investigation) and Attorney-at-Law. Here are some excerpts from the interview:

**You were directly involved in this matter. Could you explain what actually happened?**

The final day for submitting the accounts for 2023 was December 31, 2023. Unfortunately, Samaththuwa Kadchi did not submit the report by that date. We gave a four-month period to prepare the document, but they did not submit the documents during this time. We provided another two-month period as a relief. Despite sending two reminders, we received no response. I even tried to contact them personally through the numbers they had provided, but those numbers were no longer in service.

I submitted the commission paper to the Commission, mentioning the situation in early July. The Commission then instructed me to send an official notice to their Kilinochchi office. Subsequently, I sent Election Commission officers to their office in Kilinochchi, where they met with representatives from the party. They stated they would submit the report after two more months. I informed the Commission of this, and they decided to deregister Samaththuwa Kadchi.



After the deregistration, the party appealed. Unfortunately, our system does not allow for appeals once a party has been officially deregistered, so the appeal was rejected.

**Does this mean that Samaththuwa Kadchi cannot be registered again?**

They can only register as a new party when we open registrations for new parties.

**So they must start a new party?**

Yes, they will have to start a new party.

**Can they use the same name again?**

They can, but I am uncertain about the fate of the party's symbol.



# India Calls for Full Implementation of 13th Amendment and Provincial Council Elections in Sri Lanka

India has urged Sri Lanka to implement meaningful devolution of powers to Provincial Councils, conduct Provincial Council elections, and fully enforce the 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution. Speaking during the 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Gaurav Kumar Thakur, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of India, emphasized these steps as essential for addressing the ethnic issue and ensuring equality, justice, dignity, and peace for the Sri Lankan Tamil community.

Thakur emphasized two core principles underpinning India's support for Sri Lanka. First, the importance of addressing the aspirations of the Tamil community, and second, the imperative of safeguarding Sri Lanka's unity, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. He reiterated that a comprehensive political solution, including the meaningful devolution of powers to Provincial Councils, is essential for achieving lasting reconciliation in the country.

He noted that India has been a steadfast partner in supporting Sri Lanka's national recovery efforts, providing over USD 4 billion in assistance in 2022 to help the country navigate its economic crisis. India also played a key role in collaborating with the Sri Lankan government on debt restructuring efforts, further strengthening



bilateral cooperation during this challenging period.

While acknowledging recent reconciliation efforts by the Sri Lankan government, Thakur called for the swift and meaningful implementation of Sri Lanka's commitments, particularly the full execution of the 13th Amendment. This amendment, introduced after the India-Sri Lanka Accord in 1987, provides for the establishment of Provincial Councils and devolution of powers to the provinces, but its full implementation has faced delays over the years.

India expressed hope that the upcoming elections in Sri Lanka would further the cause of national reconciliation and advance the political solution to the ethnic issue, reinforcing long-term stability in the island nation.

# **With Courage and Duty, Ranil Wickremesinghe Led the Nation from Darkness to Light – Majority Will Vote for Him, Says Douglas Devananda**





BY:

## Our Reporter

Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda, founder and secretary of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), has achieved a remarkable feat unmatched by any Tamil politician in Sri Lanka's history—completing 30 uninterrupted years in Parliament. On August 16th, he celebrated this milestone, underscoring his enduring influence in the Tamil political landscape. Now, with his party firmly backing President Ranil Wickremesinghe's candidacy, we sat down with Minister Devananda to gain his insights into this pivotal moment and the evolving political landscape.

**You were among the earliest to endorse President Ranil Wickremesinghe for the upcoming election, even before other political players made their move. What makes you confident that the Tamil community should rally behind him, and how do you plan to inspire their support at the polls?**

My relationship with Ranil Wickremesinghe spans decades, dating back to 1990 when I returned to Colombo from India to participate in the National Political Stream. Even in his speeches, he humorously claims that he 'trained' me. While some might mistake this for military training, it was purely political. Over the years, I have met with him numerous times to address the pressing concerns of our people, which has led to a long-standing, trust-based political relationship.

There were, of course, interruptions in our association due to changes in government. However, three years ago, when the country was on the brink of economic collapse, then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa called upon many prominent leaders to form the government. Among those invited were leaders who are now contesting the presidential election, yet none were willing to take on the responsibility, fearing political consequences.

They were afraid that if they took on the responsibility, they too would fall into the political abyss, and their political careers would be ruined. But President Ranil Wickremesinghe, with courage and a sense of duty towards the nation and its people, stepped forward and has since led the country from darkness towards light. I believe that the majority of the people in this country have realized this.

Ever since the current President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, took on the role, I expressed my belief that, given the circumstances at the time, he was the only one capable of leading the country out of the economic collapse and towards recovery. I was the first to applaud him during the initial cabinet meeting, a gesture of my faith in his ability. That faith has not been misplaced.

I've had the privilege of walking alongside President Wickremesinghe during this challenging time, and I firmly believe that, under his leadership, the country is headed toward a future of progress and prosperity. I am confident that ordinary citizens see this too—that they've witnessed his courage and leadership when it was most needed. And I trust that, when it comes time to vote, many will remember who stood by them and helped turn the tide.



## **How can you logically conclude that Tamils will vote for Ranil Wickremesinghe?**

Ranil Wickremesinghe has long been a familiar and welcoming figure to the Tamil community. His history of engaging with Tamil concerns has fostered trust over the years. A clear example of this connection was during the 2019 Sri Lankan presidential election. While Sajith Premadasa was the UNP's candidate, Ranil personally took charge of overseeing the campaign in the Northern and Eastern provinces, where the majority of Tamils reside. This action strongly suggests that Ranil understands the concerns of the Tamil people and resonates with their aspirations.

During the Kilinochchi election campaign, just days before the vote, we organized a political rally that drew over 5,000 attendees—an unprecedented show of support in the region. Such a large turnout in Tamil areas reflects the deep rapport Ranil has cultivated with the Tamil electorate over the years.

**Reports indicate that many participants from the Aragalaya movement, which protested against former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, are now said to be supporting the National People's Power (NPP) and its presidential candidate, Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Some suggest that he is gaining momentum, particularly in the southern regions of the country. How do you perceive this potential shift, and what impact could it have?**

There's certainly a lot of buzz around this

shift, but if we look at past election data, the NPP has historically secured only a small percentage of the vote, around 3-4%. Whether this newfound support can translate into a majority sufficient to win the presidency remains to be seen. It's still unclear if this momentum is sustainable.

The Aragalaya protests arose from widespread frustration over the lack of essential goods—food, fuel, medicine—driving people to the streets. Today, many of those pressing issues have been addressed, and life has largely returned to normal. The immediate crisis is no longer as acute, and stability is gradually returning.

Ranil Wickremesinghe stepped in when the country was on the brink of collapse. There were shortages of almost everything, with long queues for essentials. Under his leadership, those shortages have been addressed, and the country has regained a level of normalcy.

Additionally, the Peoples' Struggle Alliance, formed by Aragalaya activists, has named Lawyer Nuwan Bopage as their presidential candidate. This shows that not all Aragalaya protesters are aligning with the NPP, so the assumption that the entire movement is supporting Anura Kumara Dissanayake is not entirely accurate.

**How has your transition from involvement in the armed struggle to joining the National Political Stream shaped your perspective on national reconciliation and the leadership needed to address the challenges faced by the Tamil community?**

As for my journey, my involvement in the



*President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Minister Douglas Devananda greeting the crowd gathered at EPDP's public campaign in Kilinochchi, in support of the presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe.*

armed struggle was not born out of impulsive emotion; it stemmed from a long history of grievances. However, over time, I realized that armed conflict wouldn't bring the Tamil people the justice they deserve. This realization led me to join the National Political Stream. Our guiding principle has always been clear: "We will act and enable others to act." This isn't just a slogan; it embodies our approach to national reconciliation. We tell our people, "Trust us, walk with us, and we will lead you forward, helping to resolve the issues you face." This is not empty talk—it's a philosophy we live by, laying the foundation for real, lasting change.

Unlike some other Tamil politicians, I have never returned to my community, claiming, "The Sinhalese leaders deceived us." I don't believe in making excuses or shifting blame.

**How do you view the approach of other Tamil political parties in addressing the community's issues? Do you believe they are genuinely working**

**towards solutions, or are they keeping these problems alive for political gain, as seen in past events like the Thimpu talks?**

Unfortunately, many Tamil political parties continue to operate in a way that prioritizes their own political gain over genuinely addressing the community's challenges. A prime example of this can be seen during the Thimpu talks. At that time, I was with the EPRLF, and we, along with the other armed groups, participated in the negotiations without fully understanding how the outside world or international politics functioned. Our goal was to disrupt the process, and we put forth demands we knew the Sri Lankan government wouldn't accept, aside from perhaps one.

However, the troubling reality is that even today, Tamil politicians—who now understand the dynamics of global politics—still follow a similar approach. They keep Tamil issues





*President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Minister Douglas Devananda, and others at a public campaign meeting.*

unresolved, not out of ignorance, but intentionally, to sustain their own political relevance.

In 2015, for instance, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) helped bring the Good Governance government to power by promising a new constitution. When those efforts failed, they shifted the narrative, claiming betrayal by the Sinhala leaders. They knowingly manipulate these situations for their benefit, perpetuating the same harmful cycle at the expense of real progress for the Tamil people.

We must start with what we already have. The 13th Amendment and the provincial council system are embedded in our constitution, and it's practical to build on this foundation to secure further rights. Ironically, the same people who once labelled me a traitor for supporting the 13th Amendment now demand it themselves, asking, "Will you give us half or three-quarters of the rights?"

The truth is that Tamil rights can only be secured through national reconciliation.

Real solutions come from working with both the ruling party and the opposition. Yet, some Tamil politicians have hidden agendas, preferring to perpetuate these issues rather than solve them.

Take Sumanthiran, for instance—he claimed they'd support anyone who grants federalism, but in reality, that's an impossible promise in this country. The term "federalism" alone terrifies the Sinhala majority. What we need are tangible rights, not divisive labels.

We've missed countless opportunities, many of them due to failures in Tamil leadership itself. These were chances earned through the sacrifices of our people, but the leadership simply let them slip away. For example, before the Indo-Lanka Accord, we used to call it the "Sinhala government," but after the Accord was signed, the political landscape in the South fundamentally shifted. We should have seized that moment.

When C.V. Wigneswaran became the Northern Province Chief Minister, he was given a golden opportunity. Initially, he



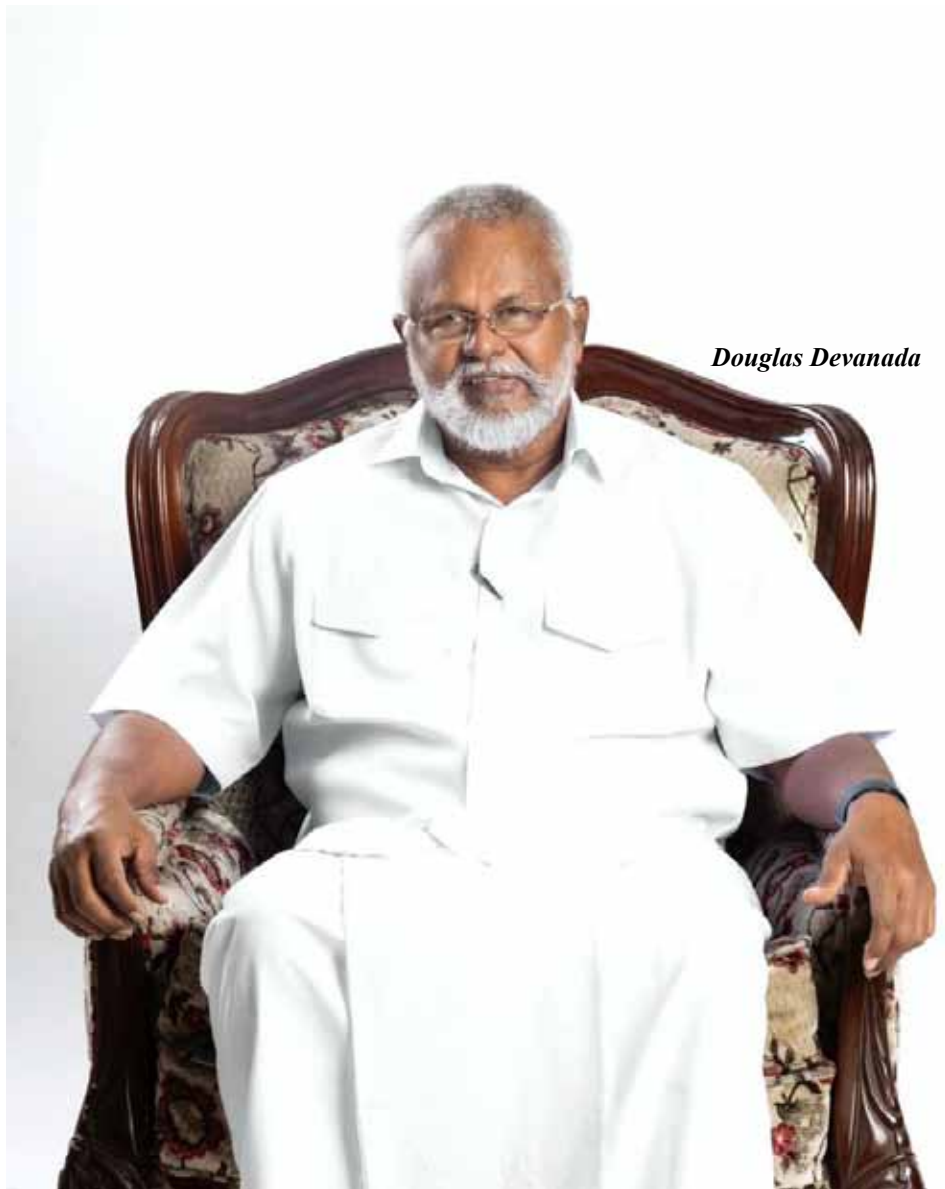
refused to take the oath before President Mahinda Rajapaksa but later did so, much to Rajapaksa's delight. I witnessed Rajapaksa gifting Wigneswaran a picture of Lord Ganesha in goodwill. Yet, despite this opportunity, Wigneswaran returned crores of unutilized funds meant for the Northern Province back to the central government—funds that could have transformed the region.

Many Tamil leaders are often driven by external agendas. A recent example is Tamil Arasu Katchi's endorsement of Sajith Premadasa, only for its leader, Maavai Senathirajah, to publicly oppose it, then reverse his stance the next day—an embarrassing spectacle.

In the end, it's clear that many Tamil leaders are playing a political game, keeping the struggles of the people alive for their own benefit, rather than genuinely working towards meaningful solutions.

### **What is your opinion about the common Tamil candidate?**

It's the same old strategy our so-called Tamil leaders have been using from the beginning—keeping the



*Douglas Devanada*

Tamil people's issues unresolved just to capture votes. It's a playbook they never seem to put down. Even among those advocating for a "common Tamil candidate," there's no unity. They're riddled with disagreements and divisions within their own ranks.

### **Can the common Tamil candidate bring about any real change?**

Absolutely not. If anything, it will just deepen the existing gaps. As you pointed out, this election is a three-way race, so the reality is we need to engage in discussions with the major candidates.

Sinhala candidates aren't going to support anything beyond the 13th Amendment, and they certainly aren't going to consider federalism. These candidates aren't about to risk angering or



*People gathered at one of EPDP's rallies organized in support of President Ranil Wickremesinghe.*

alienating southern Sinhala voters. They won't start antagonizing the Sinhala masses just because some Tamil leaders engage in hollow rhetoric—which, honestly, is no better than political belching. It's loud, it's empty, and it disappears into thin air with no substance.

Ranil Wickremesinghe, however, has clearly stated in his manifesto that he intends to fully implement the 13th Amendment. He's agreed to return the powers that were taken over by executive decisions. The first step is simple—all it needs is a presidential signature. But the Tamil parties don't want to acknowledge this because once the real issues are resolved, they'd lose their favourite tool for political manipulation. They thrive on keeping things unresolved.

The second step involves securing a simple majority in Parliament. For example, if 50 members are present, only 26 votes are needed to pass a motion. The third step is securing a two-thirds majority, which is more challenging. However, if the first two steps are accomplished, the third will follow naturally. Yet, Tamil parties are reluctant to agree to any of this because it disrupts their game.

Now, let's talk about the Tamil political landscape. Each of these parties has its own ideology, but the truth is that they were all bundled together by Prabhakaran, much like a sack full of potatoes, to form the TNA. After Prabhakaran's demise, the sack unravelled, and the potatoes rolled all over the place. The bag that once held them together? It's completely disintegrated. And now, these scattered parties are running in different directions, with no one able to tie them together again. It's almost comical.

Tamil Leaders with divisive agendas should prove their strength by standing on their own two feet and running as independent entities. Once they've shown what they can do, they can talk about forming alliances. But clearly, that's too much for them to handle.

If we can secure 4-5 seats in the upcoming parliamentary elections, we will be in a strong position to resolve many of our issues. We have a solid plan for national reconciliation backed by a robust policy framework.

Unlike other parties, we don't just throw



around lofty ideas—we have a comprehensive action plan. Other Tamil parties, on the other hand, make a lot of noise about federalism, but where are their real, actionable plans? What do those who oppose a unitary state actually bring to the table? I doubt they have much to show. we are not just pushing policies; we're offering a practical way forward, and that's what sets us apart.

**You have been a Member of Parliament for 30 years, yet your party has struggled to win a significant number of seats in Parliament. Additionally, a Saiva religious preacher recently commented that you operate more like a militant leader—not in terms of violence, but in your style of leadership. He also claimed that your party lacks future leadership. What is your perspective on this?**

Leadership, whether in my party or any other, cannot be predicted or appointed prematurely. It is something that naturally arises when the time and circumstances demand it. If you look at any political party, not just ours, it's impossible to say with certainty who the next leader will be. Take the Tamil parties, for example—who can definitively point out the future leaders of each? Leadership emerges out of necessity—when a void presents itself, it will be filled, just as it was in my own journey.

As for the preacher's comments, I must point out that 90 percent of what he wrote in the same article was, in fact, praise for me. The remaining part, where he criticizes my leadership style, stems from his own apprehension. It seems that if he were to praise me without reservation, he fears that he might

be marginalized within his own circles. I see no reason to dwell on such remarks. After three decades of dedicated public service, I believe my actions speak far louder than any accusations. In leadership, it's not about seeking validation from critics but about staying true to one's principles and actions.

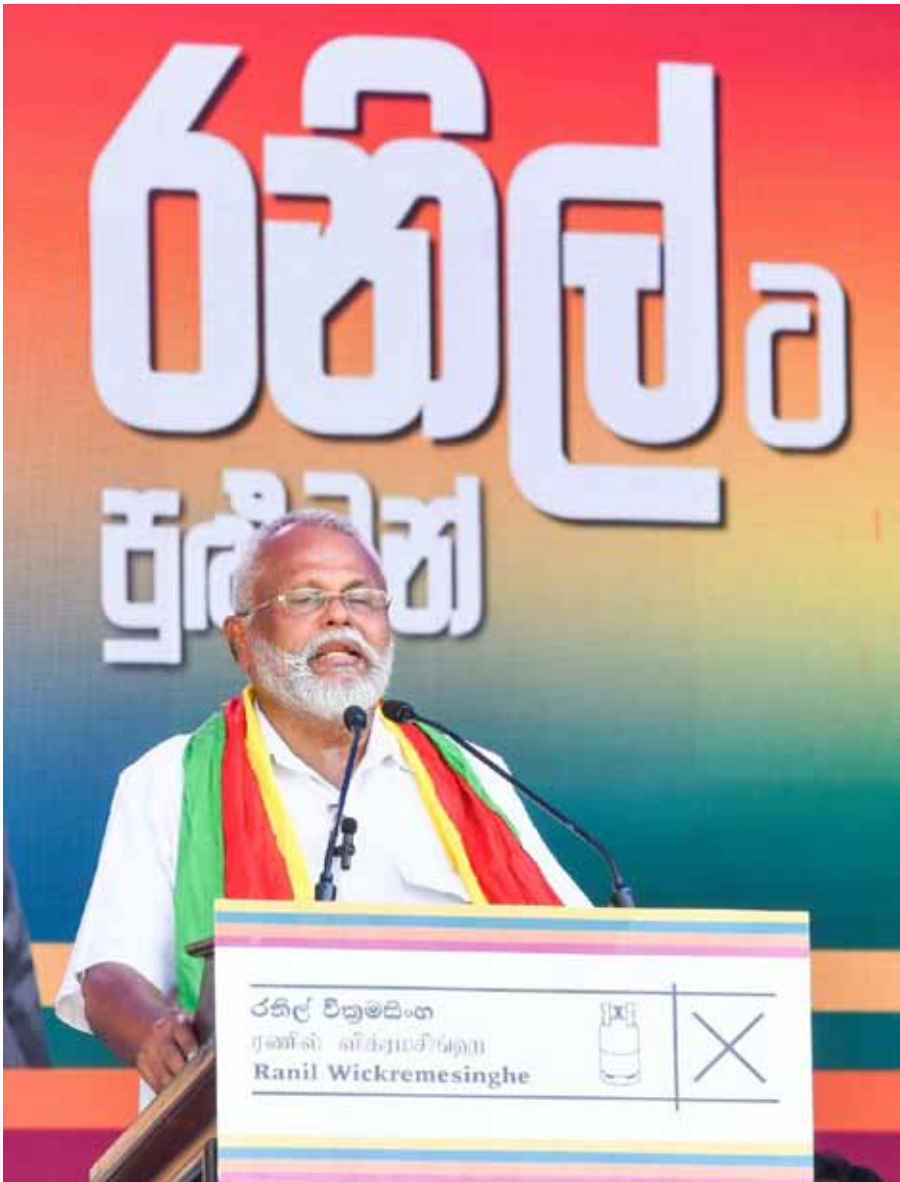
**Why has your party yet to be able to increase its number of parliamentary seats?**

I accept that our campaign efforts have not been as robust as they should be, and that's something we need to improve. However, there is a deeper issue at play, and that is the pervasive false narratives that have been spread about us by the Tigers and their proxies. They have led a well-coordinated smear campaign against us, spreading vile lies and propaganda that, unfortunately, many people believed. But the truth is far from what was painted about us.

For years, I have chosen not to respond to these falsehoods because I firmly believe that the truth does not need constant defence. I know who I am, my party knows me, and most importantly, the people who support us know the truth. I saw no reason to dignify those lies with responses. The accusations made against us never held any weight. After the 2015 elections, during the Maithripala Sirisena administration, they made multiple attempts to involve me in false cases, yet none of those accusations stood. They were all proven to be untrue.

We have faced adversity and slander but have endured because our integrity remains unshaken. There's an old MGR song that perfectly encapsulates my approach to these challenges: “ஊர் பார்த்த உண்மைகள் உனக்காக வாழும்” The truths witnessed by





**Kachchi (ITAK) today. With internal leadership struggles and factions within the party backing different presidential candidates, is ITAK losing its status as the primary party representing the Tamil people?**

It is indeed true that, in its early years, the ITAK played a pivotal role in advocating for the grievances and aspirations of the Tamil people. When we were children and teenagers, it stood at the forefront of the fight for Tamil rights. However, over time, Prabhakaran began using the party for his own purposes, manipulating it like a Petromax lamp—adjusting its influence, turning it up or down as it suited his needs.

the world will live for you." This sentiment resonates deeply with me. I have always adhered to the belief that when you are grounded in truth, you do not need to shout to be heard.

**What is your estimation of the other two prominent presidential candidates, Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Dissanayake?**

As for the other two candidates, Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Dissanayake, I believe there's little need for further comment. At this juncture, our nation's priority lies in addressing its most urgent challenges, and I trust Ranil to be the leader best equipped to meet them head-on.

**There seems to be growing speculation about who truly controls the Ilankai Tamil Arasu**

I disagree with the notion that ITAK remains the primary party representing the Tamil community today. At one point, they were proxies for Prabhakaran, and now they seem to serve the interests of other external forces. The internal power struggles and lack of unified direction have diluted their standing, and they no longer hold the same significance or authority they once did.

**To be continued...**

# Common Candidate, Uncommon Blunder: EPRLF Senior in Hot Water After Facebook Ballot Fiasco

In a move that's guaranteed to make election authorities break into a cold sweat, a senior member of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) found himself in hot water after proudly posting a marked ballot paper on Facebook—because, apparently, discretion is overrated.

The said senior party member, K. Arunthavarasa (alias Mezhikumaran), who moonlights as the treasurer for a public organization backing the common Tamil candidate, decided to showcase his voting prowess on social media by uploading a photo of a postal ballot marked with the conch symbol. The incident took place on the 5th of this month, smack in the middle of the postal voting days (4th, 5th, and 6th).

Naturally, this whole saga didn't fly under the radar. After the Vavuniya District Assistant Election Commissioner, and a few sharp-eyed election monitors spotted the post, the Assistant Commissioner wasted no time filing a formal complaint with the Vavuniya police.

In classic CSI style, the police swooped in, called Arunthavarasa in for a little chat, and confiscated his phone. Now, it's off for "analysis"—though we can all imagine what they'll find: selfies, endless WhatsApp forwards, and probably a few theories about

how the common Tamil candidate is beneficial—at least financially—to those backing him.

Adding to the drama, it turns out Arunthavarasa isn't the only one with a ballot-paper-photography obsession. A teacher in Mullaitivu, another devoted fan of the conch symbol, was also arrested for snapping a similar photo. Clearly, this common Tamil



*K. Arunthavarasa (alias Mezhikumaran)*

candidate and its conch symbol have already started causing trouble for their supporters. Many in the community are murmuring that, with the candidate almost certain to fail, the real trouble for the Tamil people will begin after the election, as the consequences of yet another futile effort unfold.

# Sritharan's Strategy: No Matter What Happens, It's a Win for Tamil Politics-According to Him

In a textbook case of Tamil political opportunism, S. Sritharan, Member of Parliament for Jaffna-Kilinochchi and one of the two key figures caught in the leadership tussle within the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) has spun a narrative that seems a bit hard for anyone to swallow. According to Sritharan, no matter the outcome of the Presidential Election, the Tamil people—thanks to their Tamil Common Candidate, Pakkiaselvam Ariyanethran—will emerge victorious. It's an argument that could be described as political manoeuvring at its finest (or worst), depending on who you ask.

Speaking during a recent trip to London, Sritharan told a radio station, "The Tamil Common Candidate is not just an individual. It is a symbol of the Tamil nation. This symbol will open a great path for the Tamil people in



*S. Sritharan*



*Ariyanethran*

the future. Therefore, this is just the beginning, not the end." It sounded grand enough, but what Sritharan seemed to be hinting at was that even if Ariyanethran doesn't win big, it's still a triumph.

"Even if Ariyanethran secures 8-10 lakh votes, it won't be a traditional win. Instead, it will be seen as a mandate from the Tamil people. If he gets 51% of the votes in the Northern and Eastern districts, that's our real victory,"



Sritharan explained, painting a picture where the bar for success is so flexible it's almost as if he knows it will never happen.

And if Ariyanethran doesn't secure those votes? Well, Sritharan is ready to spin that too. "This election isn't about making a Tamil the President. There's no history where we lost the presidency just because we didn't get enough votes," he added, subtly lowering expectations. Apparently, victory here is less about the actual result and more about "sending a message"—a message that Sritharan insists is about reclaiming Tamil sovereignty and setting the stage for future political struggles.

But just in case this round doesn't go as planned, Sritharan hinted there would be

plenty more opportunities ahead. "We should continue fielding a Tamil Common Candidate in future elections, whether it's Ariyanethran or someone else. This will force southern political parties and Sinhala leaders to realize that the Tamil people have serious political issues that need solutions."

In the end, Sritharan's approach seems to be a masterclass in ensuring that, no matter the outcome—win, lose, or somewhere in between—the Tamil political camp, and more importantly, he and the leaders backing the Tamil Common Candidate, walk away claiming a victory of sorts. Whether anyone else buys into that optimistic narrative, however, remains to be seen.

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## MONITOR MEMO

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# Ranil Critiques NPP Manifesto: Calls for Clarity on Economic Vision

In a recent interview, incumbent President and presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe took aim at the National People's Power (NPP) manifesto, highlighting contradictions and unclear policies.

Wickremesinghe humorously remarked, "It took a whole night to read its 232 pages—it's not an easy task." He pointed out a fundamental inconsistency in NPP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake's economic vision, noting that while Dissanayake advocates for an export-oriented economy, the manifesto proposes cancelling free trade agreements, which are essential for such a strategy.

The President also drew attention to internal

disagreements within the NPP on economic policies, referencing figures like Sunil Handunneththi and Dr. Suriyapperuma, who have criticized the Economic Transformation Bill. Wickremesinghe expressed concern about the NPP's approach to printing money, warning, "If money is printed, the system will collapse, and I don't see any benefit from it."

He then extended a challenge to Dissanayake for a debate but called for clarity on whether the NPP supports an export-oriented or import-oriented economy. "Once that's clear, we can talk to the IMF and have a proper debate," Wickremesinghe added, setting the stage for a potential economic showdown.

# "The Majority of Tamils Support Ranil, I Personally Prefer AKD"

## An Exclusive Interview with M.A. Sumanthiran



BY:

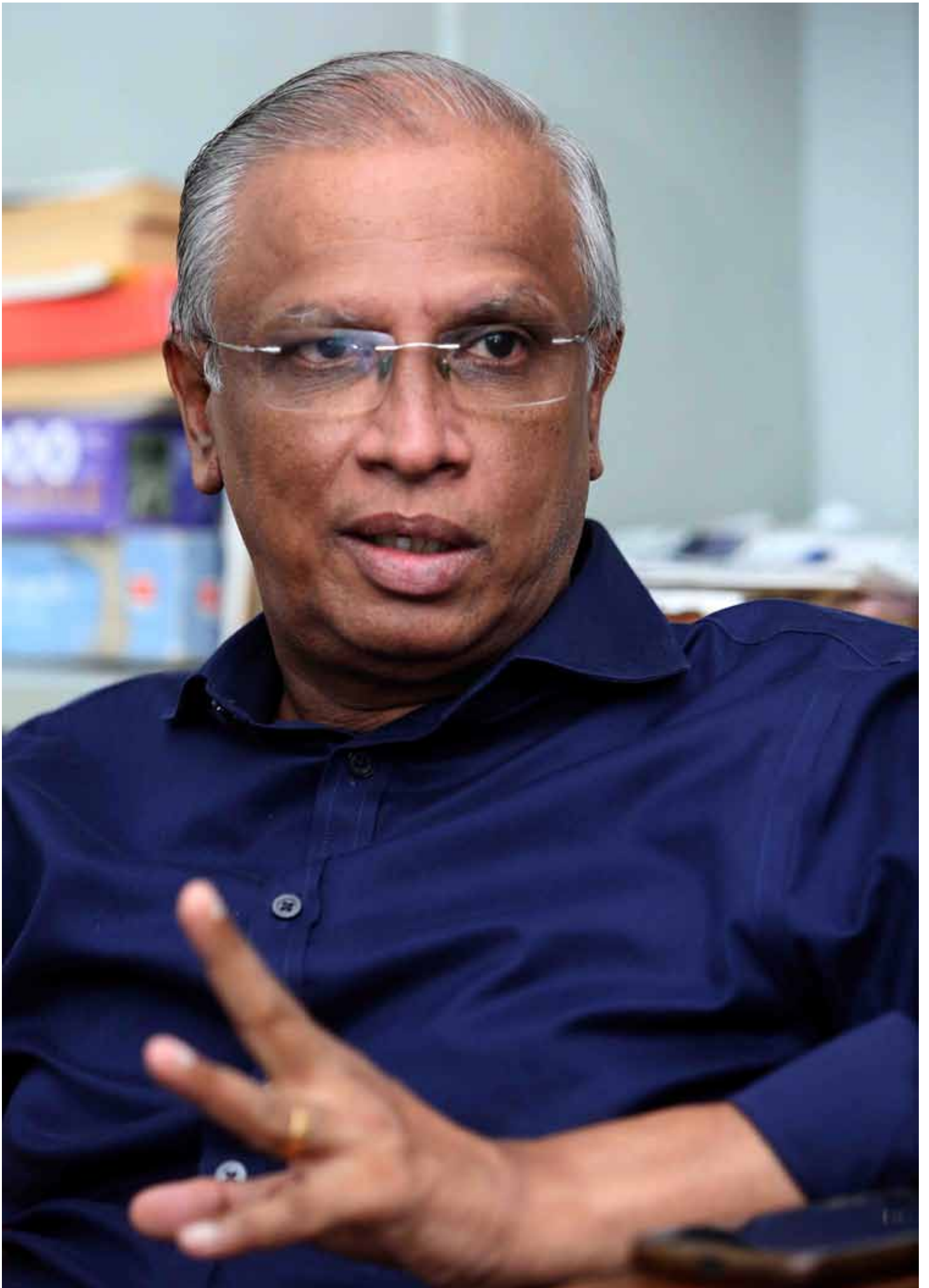
**Our Special Correspondent**

**W**e met M.A. Sumanthiran at his Colombo residence. A prominent civil lawyer with an illustrious career in civil litigation, human rights, and constitutional law, Sumanthiran has represented the Jaffna District as a Member of Parliament since 2015. Prior to that, from 2010 to 2015, he served as a National List MP under the banner of the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi. What follows are excerpts from a wide-ranging and hard-hitting interview with him. Part 2 of this candid conversation will be featured in our next issue.

**The Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) has faced internal divisions**

**recently, with factions supporting different presidential candidates, leading to conflicting statements from its leaders. Who currently holds the official position within ITAK, and which faction's voice should the general public or ITAK supporters consider as the party's official stance?**

The official stance of ITAK is determined by its Central Committee. Therefore, any decision made by this body should be considered the party's position, regardless of differing opinions among individual leaders.





**Among the three main presidential candidates, Ranil Wickremesinghe commands the most influence within the Tamil population, largely due to his long-standing political career free from ethnic nationalism and racial politics—a principle deeply valued by the Tamil community.**

**What actions has the party taken against Ariyanethiran, a Central Committee member of ITAK, who was announced as the common Tamil candidate?**

Ariyanethiran's actions were deemed to be in breach of the party's core principles. Consequently, the party has formally requested an explanation from him, marking the initial phase of the disciplinary process. Further actions will be determined based on his response and subsequent proceedings.

**What will be the final step in this process?**

The final step will involve a formal inquiry conducted by the party's disciplinary committee. Based on the findings of the investigation, appropriate measures will be implemented. Until the conclusion of the disciplinary proceedings, Ariyanethiran is barred from participating in any party meetings, including his role as Vice President of the District Committee and as a member of the Central Committee.

**Will he be expelled from the party?**

That remains to be seen, as it will depend on the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings and the findings of the committee.

**In your view, who do you believe will win the upcoming election?**

Based on my analysis of the current political landscape as of today, I foresee the contest narrowing to two formidable contenders: Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Dissanayake (AKD). Both have amassed substantial support and represent pivotal segments of the electorate, positioning themselves as the key forces in this political race.

**Setting aside the party's decision, which presidential candidate do you personally support?**

Personally, I would prefer to support Anura Kumara Dissanayake. However, there is a challenge in this regard. His support among the Tamil population in the Northern and Eastern provinces is relatively low, with estimates suggesting it may not exceed 10%. In such a situation, I am uncertain whether supporting him would be a viable option.

**In your opinion, whom will the majority of Tamil people support?**

The majority of Tamil support is currently behind Ranil Wickremesinghe, followed by Sajith Premadasa. However, if true change is desired, I believe Anura Kumara Dissanayake could bring about at least a minimal shift. The

## **Anura Kumara Dissanayake offers the potential for at least a minimal shift.**

other two have been part of the existing system for a long time, and I doubt they would be able to bring any significant reforms to governance. Whether Anura Kumara will win or not, I cannot say, but if elected, there could be a different approach to governance under his leadership.

### **But Anura Kumara Dissanayake has not said anything regarding Tamil rights, has he?**

Actually, he has. When questioned about land and police powers, he stated that all powers currently provided in the constitution would be implemented as they are.



### **You mentioned that among the three leading presidential candidates, Ranil Wickremesinghe enjoys more support among the Tamil people. What is the reason for that?**

Among the three main presidential candidates, Ranil Wickremesinghe holds the most influence within the Tamil population. A significant reason for this is his long-standing political career, during which he has consistently avoided using ethnic nationalism or racism for political gain. This belief is strongly held within the Tamil community.

### **Is that true?**

Yes. Ranil has never exploited ethnic divisions or resorted to racism for political advantage. Notably, in 2005, he openly supported a federal system during his presidential campaign. However, he lost that election primarily because voters in the Tamil-speaking North and East were prevented from voting by the LTTE. Had the Tamil population been able to vote, it is widely believed that he would have won. The Tamil community recognizes that his defeat was largely due to their inability to participate, and some of the older generation

**Ranil and Sajith have long been part of the existing system, and I seriously doubt their ability to bring any meaningful reforms to governance.**

**In 2005, Ranil Wickremesinghe lost the presidential election primarily because Tamil-speaking voters in the North and East were prevented from voting by the LTTE. Had they been able to participate, it's widely believed Ranil would have won. Many within the Tamil community, especially the older generation, now feel a sense of responsibility to rectify this missed opportunity and support his leadership.**

feel a sense of responsibility to correct this missed opportunity.

Additionally, during his tenure as Prime Minister under the "good governance" period, the Tamil people benefitted from various development projects, with substantial funding allocated to long-neglected areas. Ranil played a pivotal role in these initiatives, and as a result, he is a familiar and trusted figure among the Tamil population. In contrast, the other two candidates remain relatively unknown to the Tamil community, while Ranil's political track record is well recognized.

While the Tamil people predominantly voted for Sajith Premadasa in the last presidential election, it was Ranil who led the campaign efforts in the North and East. In fact, he played a key role in fielding candidates like Sarath Fonseka, Maithripala Sirisena, and Sajith Premadasa in the last three presidential elections—each of whom received significant Tamil support. Consequently, there is little opposition to Ranil among the Tamil community. While some politically astute individuals may express concerns about whether he will deliver on his promises, and there is some validity to those concerns, the majority of Tamil people still view Ranil as a familiar and approachable figure.

**You have been a vocal critic of the**

**common Tamil candidate. What do you foresee as the negative impact of having a common Tamil candidate?**

Initially, there were concerns that the emergence of a common Tamil candidate could provoke a rise in Sinhala nationalism, but that hasn't happened. The Sinhala political parties have largely disregarded this candidacy, much like they did when Shivajilingam ran for president. Therefore, we don't see it as a significant issue at this stage. Currently, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism is not a major factor, largely because the leading candidates—Ranil Wickramasinghe, Sajith Premadasa, and Anurakumara Disaanayage—have refrained from fueling it. Although Namal Rajapaksa may have attempted to incite ethnic nationalism, he is not considered a serious contender.

Even within our own party, while we decided to oppose the common Tamil candidate, some members suggested leaving the decision to the people. I disagree with that approach. If we don't clearly state our position, people might assume we are undecided and may choose to support Ariyanethiran.

**What is your estimation of how many votes the common Tamil candidate may receive?**



I anticipate that he may receive between 25,000 to 50,000 votes. If that happens, it won't have a major impact and will be viewed similarly to Shivajilingam's previous candidacy. However, if the vote count exceeds 100,000, it could give the impression that a segment of the Tamil community supported him yet failed to make any real impact in the election. This would reflect poorly on the Tamil community as a whole. That's why I urged my party to take a clear stance and avoid ambiguity. As the main political party representing the Tamil people, we have a responsibility to provide leadership and direction. If we fail to do so now, we risk losing our standing as their political leaders. It is essential that we remain committed to guiding our community with clarity and purpose.

**A few political parties supporting the common Tamil candidate have signed an agreement with certain individuals. Is this appropriate? Can a political party make political agreements with individuals?**

The presidential election is entirely a political process—there is no aspect of it that can be considered apolitical. Suggesting that political considerations should be excluded from such an event is fundamentally contradictory. If political parties begin signing agreements with individuals, it raises questions about their very purpose as political entities. How can a political party, which by nature must engage in politics, enter into agreements with individuals who advocate keeping politics out of the process?

If individuals or social groups wish to provide political direction or make decisions, they must first enter the political field and earn the

**During his tenure as Prime Minister under the "good governance" period, Ranil Wickremesinghe led key development projects that greatly benefitted long-neglected Tamil areas, solidifying his reputation as a trusted and familiar leader within the Tamil community. In contrast, Sajith Premadasa and Anura Kumara Dissanayake remain relatively unknown, while Ranil's well-established political track record continues to earn respect.**



## **Ranil has never exploited ethnic divisions or resorted to racism for political advantage.**

support of the people. Only then will they have the authority to influence decision-making. Until that point, they can express their views, and as elected representatives, we are obligated to listen. However, the ultimate responsibility for decision-making lies with us, as the people have entrusted us with that authority. While individuals may offer opinions, they do not have the mandate to make decisions, and this distinction must be clear.

This is not a new issue. Attempts by individuals or civil society to influence political decision-making have occurred before. During a period when Sampanthan was more active, civil society representatives would often approach him, urging for unity and the formation of a National Council. Writers and intellectuals would present lofty theories. For example, during a meeting in Mannar attended by Bishop Rayappu Joseph and Sampanthan, a similar situation arose. After hearing the day's arguments, Sampanthan respectfully responded, "Thank you for your important views. We will make a decision at the appropriate time."

One participant, a columnist and now a prominent supporter of the common Tamil candidate, stood up and demanded an immediate decision. To his disappointment, Sampanthan calmly replied, "The people have not given you the authority to make decisions. That authority rests with us. We will not shirk that responsibility. While we have listened to your suggestions, the final decision is ours to make."

Political parties and elected representatives must maintain this clarity—the responsibility of guiding the people and making decisions

lies with us, not with civil society groups or individuals masquerading as social activists. Civil society does not hold the mandate to make political decisions.

**Some suggest that recent actions, including the common Tamil candidate initiative, are part of a coordinated effort by those who have left the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to form a new political alliance. Do you agree with this assessment?**

It is possible. They have been actively working on multiple fronts to achieve such an outcome. When the local government elections were announced, we, the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), proposed a strategy in which the parties within the TNA would contest separately, as we believed this would maximize the number of seats we could secure.

Those who are now backing the common Tamil candidate and were once part of the TNA immediately reacted by threatening to break away if we pursued this approach. However, we never asked anyone to leave. In fact, we believed that contesting separately could yield better results, but only if we remained united as a whole.

Their concern is that contesting separately would reveal the true extent of their support base, and this has caused apprehension. They are worried about exposing who genuinely has the people's backing. To counter this, they falsely accused us of attempting to break up the alliance. In reality, we only suggested contesting separately with their agreement.

## **While the Tamil community predominantly supported Sajith Premadasa in the last presidential election, it was Ranil Wickremesinghe who led the campaign efforts in the North and East.**

We have no issue with collaborating, but any decision must be based on a clear understanding of the actual support each party commands. ITAK is the only party with a comprehensive political structure. We have foundational, local, district, and constituency branches, ensuring full organizational coverage. No other party has this level of infrastructure. Moreover, ITAK operates under a fully democratic process. While the other groups may call themselves political parties, they originated from militant movements and transitioned into political entities, which is commendable. However, they still lack the internal democratic structure of a genuine political party.

Our goal has always been to unite, to build collective strength through solidarity. But for unity to be meaningful, each party must understand its role and place. When joining a prominent political force like ITAK, one cannot expect equal footing or shared leadership from the outset. A realistic grasp of political clout and organizational capability is essential for this alliance to flourish.

### **Do you think there is a chance for the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to reunite again?**

Certainly, there is a possibility.

### **Is there a chance that you would welcome back those who criticized and left the TNA?**

For the sake of broader unity, it is beneficial to come together, even if there are differences in opinion. However, they must not assume that we, ITAK, would compromise our uniqueness or alter the decisions we make for the benefit of the people.

Some within our party have raised questions, asking why we, too, should not support the common candidate since others are doing so. But true leadership lies in opposing what we believe to be harmful to the people, even if it goes against the majority opinion.

In this regard, I hold a great deal of respect for the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF). Whether their decisions are right or wrong, they stand firmly by their decisions, regardless of how many people oppose them.

Many of those who left the country at various points of time, especially during crises, hold certain fixed perceptions. We cannot blame them entirely for that—they remember the country as it was when they left, particularly those who went abroad after the 1983 violence. Their memories remain frozen in that period. But we have progressed significantly since then.

Those who still harbour resentment against the country, seeking to destabilize, bankrupt, or reignite chaos, must consider the impact their actions have on their own brothers and sisters who remain here. This is a matter that deserves serious reflection. While some abroad may cling to such views, those of us here must think critically and not be swayed by



**Initially, there were concerns that a common Tamil candidate might ignite a surge of Sinhala nationalism, but that hasn't materialized. The Sinhala political parties have largely ignored this candidacy, much like they did during Shivajilingam's presidential run.**

these destructive ideologies. Even within our party, a few individuals are often gripped by fear—"What if the diaspora cuts off financial support?"—which only adds to the challenges we face. It's an issue we need to tackle directly. And the irony? I know of a few youths who, under the cover of night, call our ITAK leaders, pretending to be diaspora professors, and our leaders actually listen to them out of respect. It's almost comical.

### **What should the diaspora do , according to you?**

The diaspora should refrain from interfering in decision-making processes. It is essential for them to recognize that the people living in Sri Lanka must be the ones who determine their own future. The role of the diaspora should be to provide support and assistance rather than exerting direct influence. Many diaspora groups understand this well, and they always consult with local leadership before making any decisions, ensuring that their actions align with the needs of the people here.

However, there are some within the diaspora who pursue their own agendas and expect us to follow suit. This is a misguided approach. For example, the concept of a "Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam" is a political stance that we do not share. While such a position may seem right for them, it does not align with the realities we face here.

They may believe in the idea of establishing a government abroad, but we are focused on finding solutions within the framework of this country. Their policies, while perhaps well-intentioned, do not fit our context, and it is unreasonable for them to expect us to work towards their objectives.

The diaspora must understand they should not impose a separate agenda on those living in Sri Lanka. Their role is to support the community here, not to dictate or determine the future course of action. The people on the ground must be allowed to lead and make decisions based on their own lived experiences and needs.

*To be continued in our next edition.*

**Note: We conducted this interview with M.A. Sumanthiran a few days before the official announcement of ITAK supporting presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa. Following the announcement, we reached out to Sumanthiran multiple times for feedback, as we were concerned that the interview might spark controversy. Unfortunately, all our attempts to contact him were unsuccessful.**

**Photos by  
Our Photographer**

# Ex-Combatants Welfare Leader Impregnates Prominent Female Functionary's Daughter, Now Faces Rape Allegations



*S. Aravinthan*

BY:  
**Our Reporter**

A 14-year-old girl from Vavuniya, now six months pregnant, and her mother have lodged a formal complaint against a former LTTE member, according to police reports. The accused, identified as S. Aravinthan—

president of the Ex-Combatants Welfare Association (Poraalihal Welfare Association)—allegedly assaulted the girl on February 21st of this year. Aravinthan, who is currently in jail under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), has been accused of sexually abusing her. With the pregnancy now six months along, both the girl and her mother have also reported the incident to the District Secretariat's Child Protection Unit.





*S. Aravinthan with ITAK MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam*



*S. Aravinthan with Tamil Nadu politician Seeman*



**போராளிகள் நலன்புரிச்சங்கம்**

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**தாயகம் விளையாட்டுக் கழகம்**  
**Thayagam Sports Club**

*The logo of the Thayagam Sports Club*



*The office of the Ex-Combatants Welfare Association (Poraalihal Welfare Association)*

Selvanayagam Aravinthan, born on January 16, 1981, hails from Paranthan, a town in the Kilinochchi District. He joined the LTTE in 2001, working covertly in its intelligence wing under the command of Colonel Charles, then head of the LTTE's operations in Colombo. Credible sources reveal that within the LTTE, he was known by the code names "Jones" or "Navalan," and also by the name Ananda Varman. His role was so secretive that even

many within the LTTE's intelligence wing were unaware of his existence. Though he is currently in Weligada Prison, his listed address remains Nagapusani Amman Kovil Road, Thonikkal, Vavuniya.

Aravinthan played a pivotal role in the infamous Claymore mine attack on January 2, 2008, which targeted an army bus opposite the Nippon Hotel on Slave Island (Company





*S. Aravinthan and other members of the Ex-Combatants Welfare Association with ITAK MP S. Shritharan.*

Roads) carrying soldiers. The explosion claimed the lives of three soldiers and critically injured 10 others. Notably, the attack occurred just a day after the assassination of Tamil lawmaker T. Maheshwaran of the United National Party (UNP) and his bodyguard at the Shree Ponnambalaneswaran Sivan Temple in Kotahena.

S. Aravinthan stands at the center of a sensational scandal after being accused of impregnating the 14-year-old daughter of a prominent member of the Ex-Combatants Welfare Association in Vavuniya. The mother, once a member of the LTTE's medical unit and originally from Eachchankulam, Shrastirikulankum in Vavuniya, is reported to have had a secretive affair with Aravinthan. This affair is said to have played a role in the eventual breakdown of her marriage.

During this affair, Aravinthan, with the help of LTTE proxies and diaspora funds, opened a water filter business in Thekkawatte, Vavuniya,

under the name JV Tube Water Shop. He would announce that on the 26th and 27th of November, his shop would provide free water to the public, as these two days were considered significant during the LTTE's Heroes' Day commemorations.

Despite the business front, the shop became a focal point for his personal entanglements. The treasurer managed the shop, and her 14-year-old daughter frequently visited to spend time with her mother.

The daughter, after transferring to a new school in Vavuniya town, often stayed at Aravinthan's house. Seen as a trusted "uncle" figure by the young woman, his home became her temporary shelter. According to police reports, it was during these stays that Aravinthan allegedly manipulated and raped the young woman, resulting in her pregnancy.

The girl's pregnancy became evident a few weeks ago, and she is now six months



*S. Aravinthan*

விடுதலைப் புலிகள் மக்கள் பேரவை  
விடுதலைப் புலிகள் மக்கள் பேரவை  
LIBERATION TIGERS PEOPLE'S FORUM



*S. Aravinthan with ITAK President Mavai Senathirajah.*

pregnant. Initially, police sources suggest that her family attempted to cover up the situation, but they eventually filed a formal complaint against S. Aravinthan.

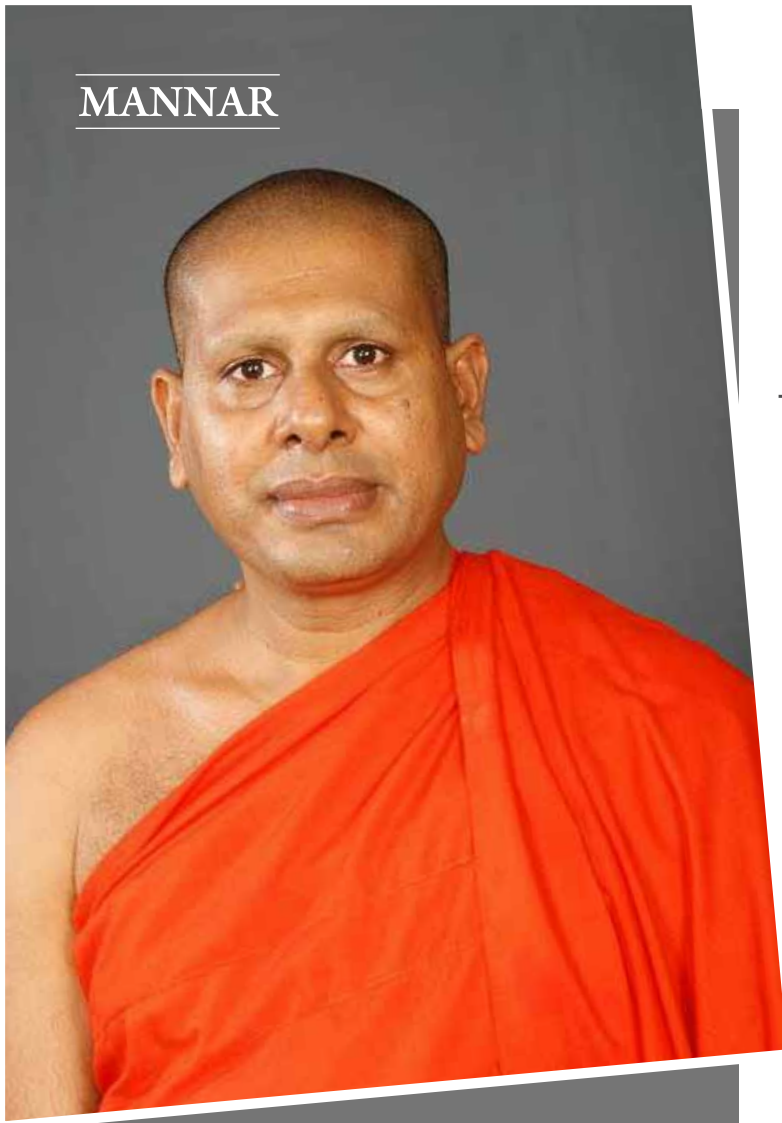
Sources indicate that Aravinthan is one of many individuals in the region who rely heavily on diaspora funds. He is reportedly receiving crores of rupees through his Thayagam Sports Club, Agni Thruvangal organization, and the Ex-Combatants Welfare Association. A few years ago, with substantial funding from the diaspora, he formed an independent group called the Liberation Tigers People's Forum to contest an election, but his group failed miserably in the polls.

He has also been a key organizer of the LTTE's Great Heroes' Day and the funeral of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination accused, Shanthan. Credible reports suggest that when Shanthan's body arrived in Colombo, Aravinthan organized a rally in Vavuniya, which led

other LTTE proxies and supporters to hold similar rallies in Kilinochchi, Jaffna, and other areas. According to reliable sources within his organization, Aravinthan is suspected of embezzling crores of rupees during these events.

Aravinthan is reportedly in contact with controversial Tamil Nadu politicians, including Seeman, and sources indicate that he traveled to India specifically to meet him. Additionally, it is alleged that Aravinthan maintains ongoing communication with segments of the diaspora and LTTE-affiliated proxies, who provide financial support with the intention of fomenting unrest in Sri Lanka. These claims have raised serious concerns about his activities and connections, both locally and internationally.





*Battaramulle Seelarathana Thero*

by:

### Our Mannar Reporter

**M**annar – Battaramulle Seelarathana Thero, the leader of Janasetha Peramuna and a candidate in the upcoming presidential election issued sharp criticism against prominent political figures during a campaign event held at the Mannar Bus Station. His remarks targeted Tamil political leaders, including M.A. Sumanthiran, alleging that they are driven by a relentless desire for power at the expense of the people.

Addressing the media, Seelarathana Thero said, "The future of our motherland depends on unity that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries. However, leaders like Sumanthiran will stop at nothing to secure

Sumanthiran and  
Others Will Do  
Anything for Power,  
Says Presidential  
Candidate

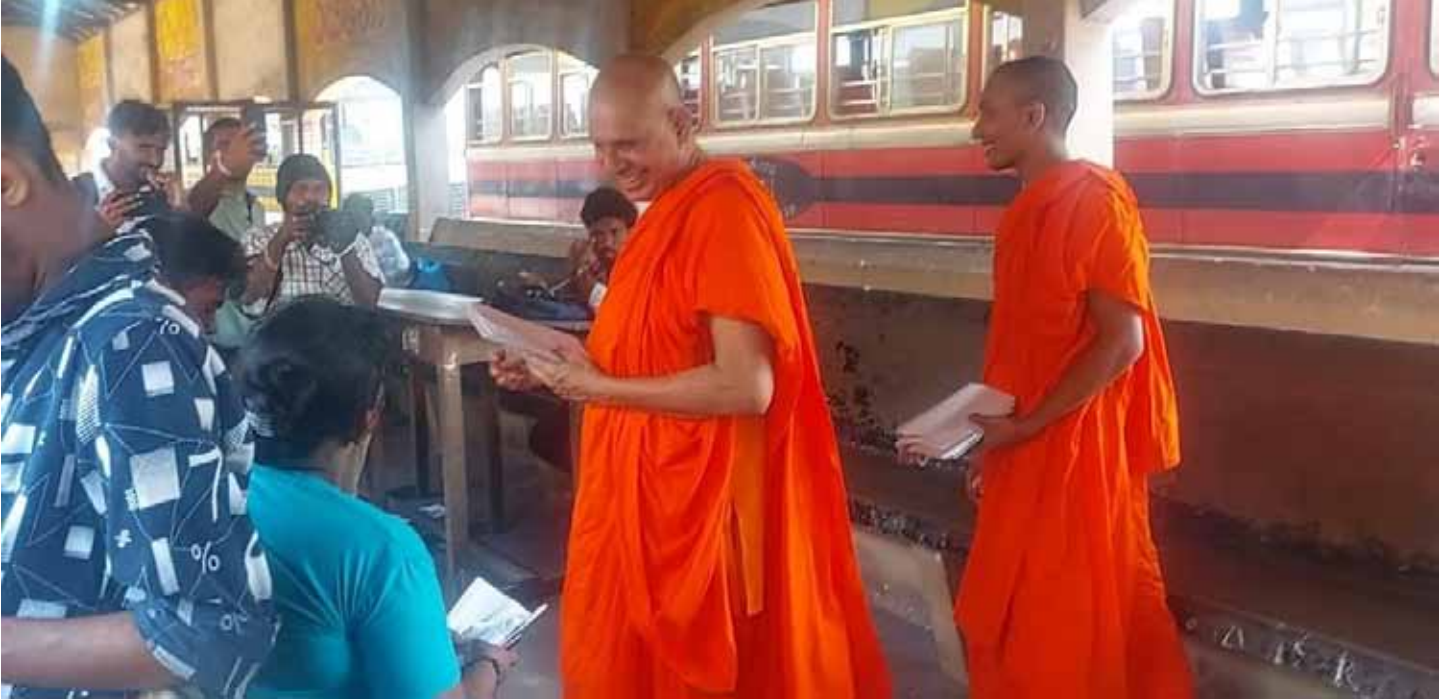
# Battaramulle Seelarathana Thero

power while the innocent people of the North and East continue to suffer."

He further claimed that Tamil political parties had aligned themselves with the opposition candidate, Sajith Premadasa, warning that







*Battaramulle Seelarathana Thero and his supporters distributing election pamphlets at the Jaffna bus stand*

similar patterns of betrayal would follow.

"Whether it's Sajith Premadasa, President Ranil Wickremesinghe, or other political leaders like Anura Kumara Disسانayake, Namal Rajapaksa, or Dilith Jayaweera, they will all abandon their promises once they come to power. The people of the North and East must be wary of these empty alliances."

The Thero expressed concern that while political leaders push their agendas, the welfare of the Tamil community in the Northern Province remains neglected. "The

children of these power-hungry leaders enjoy privileged lives abroad while their voters are left with unresolved issues. It's time the Tamil people make informed choices and vote for the Janasetha Peramuna, symbolized by the tractor, to ensure a prosperous future."

Seelarathana Thero's rally in Mannar followed a campaign stop in Jaffna, where similar concerns were raised. His supporters distributed bilingual leaflets in Sinhala and Tamil, detailing his vision and urging voters to support his candidacy.



# Dr. Manonmani Shanmugadas Joins the Legacy of Thirukkural Commentators with Groundbreaking Work



BY:  
**Our Reporter**

**D**r. Manonmani Shanmugadas has made history as arguably the first Sri Lankan Tamil scholar to write a complete commentary on the Thirukkural, an ancient Tamil text renowned for its ethical teachings. Her comprehensive work, which spans over 1,400 pages, is being celebrated for its contemporary clarity and approach.

Known for its profound insights into life and ethics, the Thirukkural has seen numerous interpretations over the centuries, but Dr Manonmani's work is particularly notable for its contemporary approach and clarity in language. While Dr. Manonmani's achievement is groundbreaking for Sri Lankan Tamil scholarship.

K.S.V. Lakshmi Ammal, also known as Lady Zamindar of Manapparai in Trichy, Tamil Nadu, was the first woman to write a full Thirukkural commentary, 'Thirukkural Deepalankaram', in 1929.

Dr. Shanmugadas dedicated the lockdown period during the COVID-19 pandemic

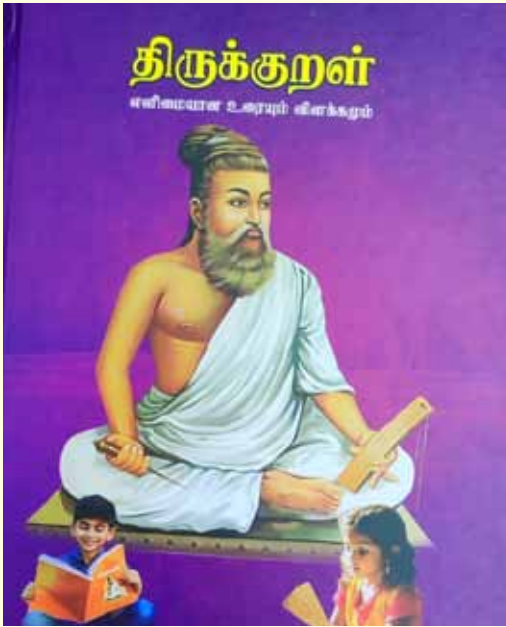


*Dr. Manonmani Shanmugadas*

to producing her commentary, which is a comprehensive analysis of the Thirukkural, providing word-for-word meanings, detailed explanations, and interpretations.

The commentary spans over 1,400 pages and is published by Evergreen Publishers in Jaffna, priced at LKR 5,000. The significance of this





*Book cover of Dr. Manonmani Shanmugadas's complete commentary on the Thirukkural*

publication extends beyond its scholarly value. It is also Dr. Manonmani's 70th book, released on her 80th birthday on 14th October 2023, a remarkable achievement in her long literary career.

Her commentary joins a long tradition of respected works on the Thirukkural, including those by Parimelazhagar, Manakudavar, Mu. Varadarajan, and Solomon Pappaiya, making it a valuable addition to Tamil literature.

This new work will likely serve as a timeless gift for future generations. Tamil scholars have welcomed the publication as an important contribution to the literary world, with many hailing Dr Manonmani's efforts to make the Thirukkural accessible to a modern audience.

## MONITOR MEMO

# Yal Devi Set to Return as Northern Railway Service Resumes

The train service between Colombo and Kankesanthurai officially resumed on September 14, following the reopening of the Mahawa Junction to Anuradhapura railway track after an extensive renovation period.

Train No. 4021, an air-conditioned intercity express, became the first to traverse the newly renovated track, departing Colombo Fort at 5:35 a.m. and returning from Kankesanthurai at 1:20 p.m. the same day. This resumption ends a nine-month hiatus on this section of the Northern Line, and railway officials have confirmed that the number of trains will gradually increase. Senior officials told Jaffna Monitor that the return of the iconic Yal Devi Express is also slated for next week.

In an exclusive conversation with Jaffna Monitor, a senior railway official highlighted

the major upgrades that came with the project. "The 66.4 km Mahawa-Anuradhapura stretch has undergone significant modernisation, including the addition of second platforms at key stations like Ambanpola, Thambuththegama, and Thalawa, which previously had only one platform. This allows for smoother operations and reduced delays," the official explained.

"Further, stations such as Galgamuwa, Shravasthipura, and Randenigama, along with Anuradhapura New Town, have been upgraded to accommodate trains with up to 20 carriages. The Mahawa to Anuradhapura track now boasts the most advanced signalling system in the country, a technological leap forward that will drastically cut delays and ensure more efficient train operations along this critical route," he added.





Angajan with Ranil Wickremesinghe at an election rally in Jaffna

# Unconditional Love for Sajith?

## Angajan Calls Out ITAK's 'No Strings Attached' Politics



BY:

**Our Reporter**

Jaffna District MP Angajan Ramanathan, representing the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and a key supporter of President Ranil Wickremesinghe in the upcoming presidential election, has taken sharp aim at the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) and prominent party figure M.A. Sumanthiran. In a pointed critique, Ramanathan questioned whether ITAK's decision to offer unconditional support

to Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa is, in fact, a betrayal of the Tamil people. He contrasted this move with the more strategic, conditional backing Sajith Premadasa received from political heavyweights like Rishad Bathiudeen and Rauff Hakeem, suggesting that ITAK's unreserved support may leave Tamil interests at risk.

Speaking at an election campaign event in Uduppidy, Jaffna, supporting Independent Presidential Candidate and incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Angajan



*From left to right:  
Senthil Thondaman  
(Eastern Province  
Governor),  
President Ranil  
Wickremesinghe,  
and MP Angajan.*



expressed his discontent. "While Bathiudeen and Hakeem have openly stated that their support for Premadasa comes with conditions, ITAK has chosen to back him unconditionally. Isn't this a clear betrayal of the Tamil people?" he asked, addressing the crowd.

He urged the Tamil population of the North and East to resist efforts to scatter their votes and warned them not to be misled by political schemes. "This is not merely an election rally; it's a gathering of gratitude. President Wickremesinghe doesn't need to campaign in the Jaffna District—he's already earned the trust of the people by steering the country through an economic crisis and giving us hope for recovery."

Angajan praised Wickremesinghe for his leadership during a difficult time, stating, "When others shirked responsibility, the President stepped up. In just two years, he has

brought the country back to normalcy. Had he not taken control, Sri Lanka could have ended up in the same dire straits as Somalia."

With the presidential election looming on September 21st, Angajan emphasized the critical nature of the decision ahead. "Do we rise, or do we fall? The choice is in the hands of the people," he said. He also warned that ITAK's actions, including MP Sumanthiran's hasty declaration of support for Sajith Premadasa, are contributing to efforts to divide the Tamil vote.

"I personally handed the President the longstanding demands of the Tamil people in writing, and only after those demands were accepted did I offer my support. Sumanthiran, on the other hand, gave his backing to the Opposition Leader without any conditions—this is nothing short of a betrayal," Angajan charged.



# Ensuring Your Vote Counts: The Power of Second Preference in the 2024 Election

**Tamil/Muslim communities could use second preference to eliminate unpredictability.**



BY:

**Sugeeswara Senadhira**

**F**or the first time in Sri Lanka's history of presidential elections, there is a strong possibility of the need to count second and third preferences of the votes cast in favour of the candidates, barring the top two who get the first count at the 9th presidential election slated for September 21, 2024.

Although there are 38 candidates in the fray, most independent observers are of the view

that the election will be a 4-cornered contest among the leading candidates, President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who stands as an independent candidate, Sajith Premadasa of Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), Anura Kumara Dissanayake of Jathika Jana Balawegaya (JJB) and Namal Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP).

Wickremesinghe got a massive boost when 92 MPs, the vast majority of them SLPPers, extended support to the United National Party (UNP) leader, who is contesting as an independent candidate. This came immediately after the decision taken by Rajapaksas to field young Namal. Even Wimal Weerawansa, most vociferous opponent of Wickremesinghe, grudgingly acknowledged, "Ranil, who was at the bottom has suddenly rose in the list of candidates". Wickremesinghe's advantage is that he brought the economy back on the rails and ended the shortage of essential items.

According to exit polls, none of the candidates will get a clear 50% + one vote, which is





*Ranil Wickremesinghe*



*Sajith Premadasa*



*Anura Kumara  
Dissanayake*



*Namal  
Rajapaksa*

required to score an outright victory in the first count. This did not happen in the first eight presidential elections from 1982 to 2019, as there were only two leading candidates at each election and one of them crossed the bar. Hence, there was no requirement to count the second and third preferential votes to decide a winner.

However, this time, the scenario is different. Most exit polls and opinion polls predict

less than 40% of the votes for the leading candidate, with 15% to 30% for each of the other main contenders. Most analysts agree that there is no clear-cut winner, and the race for the presidency is turning into a multiple-horse race.

In a scenario where none of the candidates secure more than 50% of the votes, the significance of the second preference becomes paramount. While Sri Lankan voters eagerly

# HOW TO VOTE

Candidate
  Symbol
  Preference



ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1(X)
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PQR	<input type="checkbox"/>	
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
LMN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3



ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
IOU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	3

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	3

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XYZ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
IOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
PQR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3
LMN	<input type="checkbox"/>	4

anticipate the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights this year—after two other elections, for provincial councils and local government, were postponed due to legal, economic, or other unspecified reasons—the average voter is not accustomed to recording second or third preferences in a presidential election.

The candidate who polls more than 50% of the votes is declared the winner. If no candidate secures more than 50%, the second-choice votes of voters will be counted. In this case, the votes cast for the losing candidates, except for the top two, will be reallocated based on the second and third preferences. These preferences will be added to the vote totals of the first two candidates to determine the final winner.

In a recent media interview, former Election Commission Chairman Mahinda Deshapriya

explained the process in simple terms. If there are five candidates—A, B, C, D, and E—with a total of 100 valid votes, let's assume A receives 40, B gets 35, C has 15, D polls six, and E gets four. After the first count is completed, the contest is between A and B, as they are the top two candidates. These two are considered the remaining candidates. The second or third preferences marked on their ballot papers are no longer considered in the second round because they are now the only candidates left, while the others are eliminated from the contest.

Then, the counting of the ballot papers marked for C will take place first. In case, a voter has marked his first preference to C and second to A or B, it will be considered as a vote for A or B. Then, this ballot paper is inserted into the ballot box meant for A or B. The third preference marked in this ballot paper is not considered. Also, a ballot paper marked for

C as the first choice bears second or third preferences to D or E; it will not be considered because these two are not in the contest or are eliminated candidates. Similarly, in the event of a voter marking first preference to C, second to D or E and third to A or B, it will be considered a vote to A or B as third preference.

The ballot papers cast for C, D, and E are checked for second and third preferences and validly marked for A and B.

If we assume that A gets three additional votes with his total moving up to 43 and if B gets ten more additional second preference votes will have a total of 45. The grand total is now 88. Out of it, B gets more than 50 percent and is declared President. If any of the two does not get additional votes after counting second and third preferences, the candidate 'A', who has the highest number in the first round itself will be declared winner.

In the unlikely event of a tie, where both A and B get an equal number of votes, the Election Commission can finally resort to a raffle draw to select the winner.

Voters can indicate their preferences by marking 1, 2, or 3 in front of the symbols of their chosen candidates. However, if they use an 'X' to mark their first choice, they cannot use their second and third preferences (2 and 3). To use all preferential votes, they must avoid marking an 'X.' For example, if someone marks their first choice with an 'X' and then marks their second and third choices as 2 and 3, their vote will be invalid.

The second preference will help a candidate who polled at last 40 per cent in the first round because even if the second preference vote is distributed evenly among the first two, the candidate already ahead could forge ahead to be the winner. However, if someone's first preference vote hovers around 30 per cent or

less, he would require bulk voting in his favour as the second preference.

The voters, whether Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim, will be able to safeguard their interests by casting second preference, in addition to casting their first vote for the most favourable candidate, as it will doubly ensure that the vote will not be wasted. For example, if you have a favourite candidate in mind and, while voting for him, if you have doubts about his victory, you can cast a second preference for another candidate who has better chance than your first choice. Furthermore, if you feel that one of the first two leading candidates would not serve the interests of your community, you could cast your second preference to the other leading candidate in order to prevent the former candidate from being elected.

If a voter wants to cast their first preference for a candidate from their community, but is aware that this candidate is unlikely to win due to a lack of nationwide support, they can cast their second preference for a leading candidate to ensure their vote is not wasted. By doing so, the voter can safeguard the interests of their community or religious group while still expressing their first preference among the candidates.

**Note: Sugeeswara P. Senadhira is an eminent media tactician and seasoned diplomat, presently serving as the Media Advisor to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka since August 2022. With a prolific career straddling both media and international affairs, he formerly held the prestigious position of Director (Research & International Media) to the President of Sri Lanka from 2013 to 2022. His diplomatic acumen is evidenced by his tenure as Minister Counsellor in key global capitals such as New Delhi, Paris, and Oslo. A veteran journalist, he has presided over notable media institutions, including The Independent and Sirasa, MTV/MBC, cementing his status as a stalwart in both journalism and diplomacy.**





**A Dying Child, A Silent Crowd:**

# CAN WE REALLY EXPECT SYSTEM CHANGE?



BY:

**Aaqil Sharaff**

On September 10, 2024, around 3 PM, the heat of the sun was at its peak. A friend, on his way to the Medical Faculty, noticed an unusual traffic jam on Aadiyapatham Road in Kokkuvil. Since the area is home to several wedding halls, he initially thought the congestion might be due to a wedding. At that moment, someone passing by remarked, 'It's lying ahead on the road,' and the shift in the expressions of those standing around suggested that an accident might have occurred.

Struggling through the crowd on his motorcycle, my friend pushed forward to see what had happened. A young girl who had been riding a bicycle was struck by a tipper and lay on the road, clinging to life. Not a single person had rushed her to the hospital; instead, they just stood there—watching. Without hesitation, my friend dropped his bag and helmet, lifted the girl into his arms, and desperately pleaded with the onlookers and passersby for help. But no one moved, no one offered a hand. They simply watched as her life slipped away.

Yet, no one stepped forward to help.

Finally, with the assistance of a passing motorcyclist, my friend rushed the girl to the hospital. Even as they transported her, her condition was rapidly deteriorating. Despite the best efforts of the doctors and nurses in the emergency department at Jaffna Teaching Hospital, it was too late—the girl had passed away. Her mother, unaware of the tragic news, frantically searched every bed in the hospital, desperately hoping to find her daughter alive. Witnessing this, my friend's heart shattered.

Had the girl been taken to the hospital immediately after the accident, her chances of survival would have been significantly higher. But the fact that not a single onlooker stepped forward to help is deeply disturbing. It's heartbreaking to think that this young girl could have been the same age as their own daughters. Yet, with chilling indifference, they turned their vehicles away, treating her like a lifeless object—some even casually saying, 'It's lying there,' as if her life meant nothing.

If it had been their own family member, would they have stood by so coldly? Those who constantly demand 'system change' fail to see that real change must begin within themselves. How can people who express outrage over the loss of life in distant places turn a blind eye to the death unfolding right in front of them? This wasn't just a death caused by an accident—this was a murder committed by the apathy of those who stood there and watched, doing nothing.

**Note: Aaqil Sharaff is a medical student studying at Jaffna Medical Faculty.**



# JVP Has No Right to Seek Votes in the North: SJB



*Ranjith Madduma Bandara*

In a strong statement, Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) General Secretary Ranjith Madduma Bandara MP asserted that the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) has no moral right to campaign in the Northern Province. He pointed to the party's historical opposition to the India-Sri Lanka Agreement and the Provincial Council system, stating, "Those who raised the war flag against the 13th Amendment back then, like the JVP, do not have the right to go to the North and ask for votes. Our party, however, represents all ethnic groups."

Bandara went on to emphasize the violent history of the JVP's resistance to the Provincial Council system, claiming that the party was



*Anura Kumara Dissanayake*

responsible for killing those who supported the 13th Amendment and participated in Provincial Council elections. "The JVP also targeted officials who facilitated Indian assistance programs and called for a boycott of Indian goods," he remarked, further underscoring the party's actions during that period.

Turning to his own party's stance, Bandara expressed confidence in SJB leader Sajith Premadasa's support from the Northern electorate. He noted, "The people of the North have recognized Sajith Premadasa as the leader capable of delivering the devolution of power and development they desire." According to Bandara, several prominent Tamil leaders have publicly endorsed Premadasa, and the people of both the Northern and Eastern provinces are rallying behind him. "When Sajith visited these regions, he was met with an overwhelming welcome," Bandara added.





*Pathum Nissanka with Angelo Mathews*

# A confluence of "what it could have been" and "what would this be"



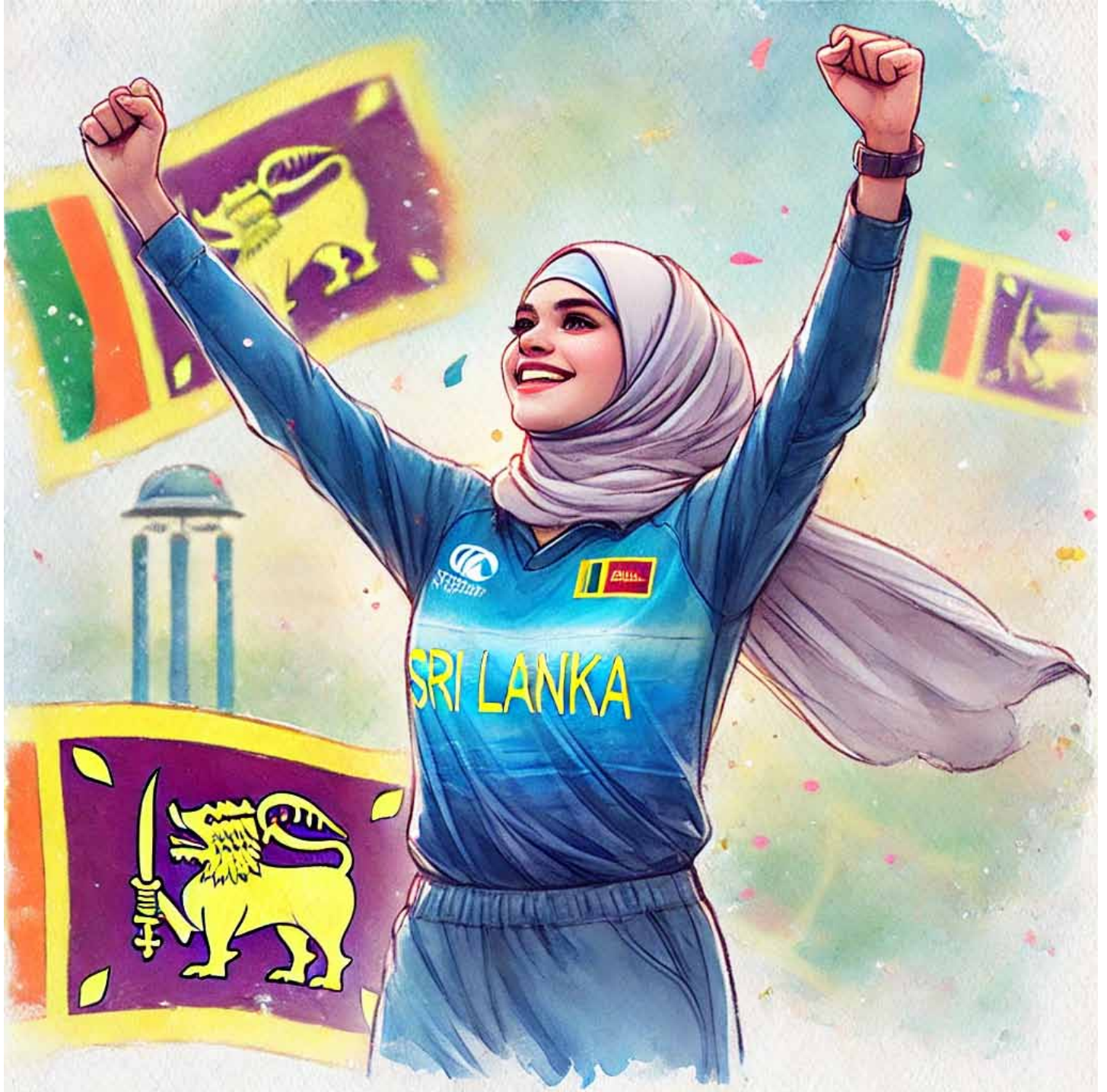
By:

**Dr. Aravinthan  
Arunthavanathan**

In a utopian world, this would be the moment to say the heir to the throne is taking over from the incumbent. However, for Sri Lanka Cricket, a utopia is as distant as water is to a rabid dog. Thus, this moment isn't what it could have been.

A decade ago, when Sri Lanka defeated England in an away Test series for the first time, Angelo Mathews was the center of attention. A century at Lord's, a century against all odds to construct an unimaginable win, and captain of the side—Angelo was living the dream he had been destined for since his youth. After all, while





most aspiring players dream of earning a place in provincial or national age-group teams, this man received calls from coaches asking him to play. He was special, and he was proving why. With the imminent exits of Sanga and Mahela, Angelo was expected to take the throne of Sri Lanka Cricket for the next decade.

What followed, unfortunately, was far from what anyone would have hoped for. Angelo's decline was akin to a major stock market crash, wiping out the value of surrounding stocks without reason. Saying Angelo's stock

plummeted would be an understatement—it sank even further. Along with it, the fortunes and hopes of Sri Lankan cricket took a nosedive. The throne fell to the ground, gathering dust and rust. There was no one worthy of claiming the seat once fought for and worn not by just the best but by the best of the best.

Fast forward a decade, and to his credit, Angelo has hung in there. It hasn't been easy. Everyone has opinions—we may never know what's right or wrong, but he's still there.



**Pathum Nissanka**

Credit to him, he remains a vital figure in the longer format of the game. While his career may not have unfolded the way we once hoped, everything he achieved up until 2014 would still surpass what 95% of international cricketers could ever dream of. You can't take that away from him.

In that sense, it was fitting that it was Angelo who walked in to join the present-day cynosure of all eyes, Pathum. It was a moment Sri Lanka could have let slip—they've done so before, and they surely could have again. Thankfully, the hero of the last victory and the hero of this one stood together, guiding Sri Lanka to triumph and bringing light to Sri Lankan hearts on a gloomy English evening.

Pathum may not yet be the rightful heir to the throne, but he surely will be. If you're wondering why, here's the reason: many

players take time to master formats, even the likes of Kohli and Rohit weren't exceptions. Rohit, for instance, was an enigma—a white-ball rockstar since 2013/14 but only truly found his place in Test cricket by 2019/20. It takes time because it's tough. But Pathum seems different. Ever since that bout of dengue and his re-entry against Afghanistan, the man has been on a mission. His white-ball game has shattered the shackles and is right up there. What's even more intriguing is how he has made his comeback at The Oval.

One match is a small sample, but sometimes, it doesn't take much to recognize true talent. Game recognizes the game, and that's why the Sky Sports panel was raving over Pathum's exploits. His second-innings knock wasn't a surprise, given the way he played in the first innings. Some innings signal what the future holds, and this was Pathum's moment.





We've seen glimpses of brilliance from Kusal Mendis and Kusal Janith, but they only reached those heights once and never repeated them. With Pathum, it feels different. Sometimes, you just know. It's hard to explain, but Pathum gives you that feeling—something that can't be quantified.

In one way or another, this moment wasn't what it should ideally have been, but it is what it is. A man who could be the face of Sri

Lankan Cricket in future, embracing the man who was that for some time in the past in what undoubtedly is one of our greatest highs.

Not everything works out the way we expect, but it's the hope that it will that keeps us coming back, time and again, despite countless heartbreaks.

Pictures tell stories, and this one certainly does.



# OUR INTOXICATION

Translated from the original Tamil short story *uṇmattarāyiruntōm* (உன்மத்தராயிருந்தோம்) from the 1964 collection of short stories titled *akkā* (அக்கா) by **A. Muttulingam**

Translated by:  
**Eluttukkinīyavan**  
(எழுத்துக்கினியவன்)

“Oh *Kachchi Ēkampā*,” a cry beseeching the deity in Kānchipuram temple, celebrated in the saiva hymn *thiruvāsakam*.

To whom else can one appeal so cheaply.

*Ekampan* my foot!

How dare you just utter this name with your dirty mouth – the holy name that deserves to be said with goosebumps all over, and tears of devotion pouring down?

*Chee*, spit that word out.

Apparently, he snivels! He grieves!

Isn't there a desolate wasteland nearby,  
overgrown with cacti and babul trees? If there  
is, go lament there! Pour your tears in there!

Like all men, you conveniently philosophize  
after you have had your downfall; but did you,  
even for a moment, understand, nay try to  
understand, the heart of Sarasā?

You know how to lift your pen without shame  
and write. But if she – she, whose heart is as  
soft as her silky body – happens to see this?

Why would you worry about that prospect?

## 2

When Sarasā came to join my school, I was  
startled.

What a beauty! She was wearing an ordinary  
saree. It struggled to completely conceal the  
beauty of her body, her slender fair hips.

Her thick locks lay shyly on her chest with  
pride, twisting and turning.

Those eyes – those blue eyes – she evidently  
knew their worth. She never lifted them to  
gaze at anyone. Only mother earth had the  
ability to withstand that gaze.

Poor her, she didn't really know how to wear  
a saree. She is barely a woman!

She struggled to walk, as her saree made a  
'sada, sada' noise.

Do you know the irresistible urge one gets to  
scoop up a toddler learning to walk because

one fears that they are going to trip and fall?  
One gets the same urge when one sees Sarasā  
walk in a saree.

When her delicate feet touch the ground, I  
marvel, wondering if there are a thousand  
hearts that are being trampled.

Jealousy never leaves anyone alone!

When the other students came to complain  
to me saying "Sarasā seems to be going  
somewhere at night," I was shocked.

Sarasā? I could not believe my ears.

But that night, I had to do the deed.

## 3

The next morning, she came to me with her  
eyes teary and downcast.

"Miss! Do I really have to go?"

"Sarasā... the news has spread throughout the  
entire hostel. Even the principal has ordered  
me to dismiss you. I am so sorry. But what  
can I do!"

"Miss! Do tell me Miss, what great crime  
have I committed?"

"He liked me; I liked him, too. Even after  
realizing that it was 'wrong', we were  
so mesmerized that we couldn't control  
ourselves. If we had come to our senses,  
would we have behaved like this? We acted as  
though we were intoxicated."

"Miss, is this an unforgivable sin? How easily  
do you kick me out of the school ... .."

"But... .. think about it Miss... .. tomorrow





the society will treat me worse than a worm that wriggles in the phlegm that someone spat out. Is that acceptable?”

“You are a woman too. Who else can understand my lapse?”

Her last question shook me!

“Isn’t a school meant to reform those who erred, rather than punish them by discarding

them?”

How can I respond?

“Sarasā, tell me the truth. How did this happen?”

The floodgates opened. She poured her heart out.

I was overwhelmed.

“Miss, I don’t care about leaving the school...  
... but, just three more days... ... couldn’t  
you have waited just three more days?”

She sobbed uncontrollably.

“You have asked me many times: ‘why are  
you knitting this sweater?’ I concealed the  
reason from you. It is his birthday in just three  
days. I poured my dreams into this lovingly  
knit sweater. To whom will I give it now?

Who will it fit except his broad shoulders?”

“How will I see him again?” she sobbed. I  
couldn’t even console her.

4

Although she went on to train as a nurse, she  
did not forget me. She wrote often. Her first  
letter ... ..

“My future is dark; there is darkness in my  
heart; there is darkness along the way; how  
will I face my father!”

“I pushed open the gate, and it felt as though I  
was pushing the entire world with my hand.”

“My father – that sightless, bony old man –  
was eating on the porch. Next to him was my  
dear sister, barely twelve. She took into her  
tender hands the responsibility for cooking so  
that her elder sister could go off to study. She  
was making the rice into balls to feed him.

“Sarasā, how come you are so early?” he  
stretched his hands towards me, his voice  
dripping with concern.

“*Aiyō!* Why didn’t a drop dead of a heart  
attack in that instant? Why didn’t my heart  
break into a hundred pieces and kill me? I

did, without shame, tell everything to my  
blind father who had dreamed day and night  
‘Sarasā will become a weaving teacher within  
three months; after that our troubles will melt  
away.’”

“If he had beat me up then, I would have had  
some solace.”

“I bore the grief of watching him eat the rice  
ball in his hand, mixed with teardrops.

“My sister - the little child - cried at my feet  
without understanding why. I bore those  
priceless tears, too.

“It is not that I didn’t know how to take my  
life. But... but ...”

“When I remember those happy days when  
we sat by the temple pond, gazing into each  
other’s eyes till eternity, hope blossomed in  
some distant corner of my heart.”

“We will lean over the pond to look at the  
reflection of the full moon in the pond.”

“We threw pebbles into the pond, breaking  
that full moon into a thousand pieces, and  
laughed out loud for no reason.”

“Suddenly he would lie on my lap and count  
the stars in the sky without end.”

“How many promises we made on those stars,  
and on the full moon.

“*urutikaḷ kōṭi ceytōm* [We made a million  
commitments]  
*uṇmattarāyiruntōm.*” [we were  
intoxicated]

“Yes, we were intoxicated.”

“Why are this full moon and the millions of





stars still sticking to the sky?”

“Hey, twinkling star, do you still believe his promise?”

“Hey, full moon, what sin did I commit to make him forget me so quickly?”

“Did that Rāju forget this innocent damsel! Has he, for whose sake I endured all the suffering in this world, and bore all the world’s

insults, even forgotten that Sarasā is alive?”

“He never responded to all those letters I wrote with my tears.”

“Do you know the reason why?”

“Miss, my fingers tremble with shame even to write these words.”

“It seems he is afraid of all the insults thrown





my way. It seems I have earned a bad reputation in the village.”

“Is an innocent woman’s love so cheap? So forgettable so quickly?”

5

As soon as her training was completed, she got a job at the Jaffna General Hospital. I expected her to forget him at least from then on, but I was disappointed. In fact, she was rather naive. She kept on yearning for a

miracle. This is what she told me ...

“It has been six months since I started working as a nurse, Miss. In all these days... in all these days, he didn’t come to see me even once. He didn’t even try. I am a woman. I have learned to bottle up my feelings. What else can I do?”

“But he is a man! Had he wanted, couldn’t he have set up a thousand opportunities? Tell me Miss!”

She sobbed uncontrollably.

She bared her heart to me as she would to a friend, without holding anything back.

“Has he, who had held my two fingers and declared ‘I will wait for an eternity for these fingers to touch me’, forgotten me in a mere two and a half years?”

Another day, she came to see me, sweating profusely. “Why at this time?” I asked.

“Do you know Dr. Chandrasēkar? He is transferring out of here. We had a farewell for him, so I couldn’t come in the middle of it,” she heaved a huge sigh.

It was election season; there were at least nine or ten surgeries each day. Sarasā barely got a break. To add to the rush, the chief doctor had taken the day off.

At around 1:00 am, the eleventh surgery was in progress. Sarasā was holding out one surgical instrument after another. She could see beads of sweat in the doctor’s forehead. Feeling that it was her duty, she took a piece of lint and dabbed the sweat off the doctor’s brows.

For some reason, the doctor put the instrument down and gazed sharply into her eyes. Then using the same piece of cloth, dabbed her own sweat off her face. All that took just a moment. No one saw.

A tingling sensation ran down her entire body. That day, he popped the question under that dome lamp. He offered an opportunity that she had not even imagined. But she turned him down without a moment’s hesitation. She had no doubt whatsoever that she belonged to someone else. If she had wanted it... all it would have taken was for her lips to move...

... but she did not want that.

Is not the fact that Dr. Chandrasekar is leaving today after having requested a transfer a testament for the depth of her love?

But she didn’t know how to express that love. As if confirming the folk wisdom that womenfolk are naive, she counted days, holding on to the faint ray of hope.

6

As usual, the Point Pedro bus dropped her off at the Kalviyankadu junction. Her house was just a stone’s throw from there. If one takes the shortcut towards Senguntha College, it is just around the corner. But the cat-eyed twins’ shop was on the way and there was always a crowd there.

Whenever she passes it, whistles and lewd comments would ricochet off her ears. In that moment, Sarasā would cringe, and her heart would wilt.

Just to avoid this embarrassment, she would take the long way by the southern end of Sangiliyan Thoppu.

That day was no different.

As she passed the ayurvedic doctor’s house by the Jak tree, she spotted someone coming on a bicycle. Her heart skipped a beat. It was him. Rāju.

As he crossed the junction and rode towards her, her heart raced. A thousand thoughts rumbled and filled her mind. “How will he start? What will he talk about? What if someone sees us”. She slowed down expectantly, with latent desire.

She sensed that he was near and was staring at

her. Expectations bubbled up in her heart.

But he didn't stop. He kept on going!

But it would have been a mercy had he kept on going. She could sense him stop at the bicycle shop far behind her. He turned and bicycled towards her again, But not alone. A *bīdi* puffing gem of a friend was in the back seat.

It was as if he was boasting: "I recognized you! But see! I didn't lose my resolve!". How did so much deceit latch on to the half-smile that made his lips curl?

As the bicycle whizzed past her, the wonderful friend's quip, "the nurse's uniform is sexy!" grated in her ears. The guffaw that followed underscored the quip.

"Dear Rāju! When did you succumb to this crowd?"

How could I not cry when she said "Miss, my Rāju, my dear Rāju is long dead"?

7

She didn't come by for many days. I went to the hospital myself. That was the first time I saw her in a nurse's uniform. The delicate lines of youth were still replete in every part of her body. She was running around, focussed on her duties as she chatted with me.

"Miss! Rāju came here. It was just a regular fever. I am not sure what made him come. But... but... he has changed a lot."

"The evil notion that a "nurse" is not a woman, not an object worthy of love, had somehow taken root in his mind."

"Tell me Miss! Is a nurse someone to be

looked down upon?"

"His gaze that used to be full of love, has now been tainted with desire. That kind gaze now reeked of lust. I am even ashamed to recount what happened. The only thing left in his gaze was the fire that wanted to taste every part of my body."

"He couldn't understand my heart. But he still wanted to stake his claim. He wanted me not to see or talk to other patients."

"If he didn't like me working as a nurse, he could have uttered just one word back then and I would have stopped. But now, every patient is like a child to me."

Sarasā! Who, but I, can truly understand her innocent heart. What did she tell me? Only I know that. "Miss! I will stay like this. No one will melt me. I can imagine no one but him as my husband. But... .. but ... .. I will never get my old Rāju back."

After that the streaming tears laid her heart bare.

I know that she will never get married. But no one else will understand that.

\* \* \*

You know only to plead "*Kachchi Ēkampā!*"

*Ēkampāṇ* my foot!

You can philosophize after falling down.

Did you try even for a moment to understand Sarasā's heart?

What is the point in lamenting now?

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