

## KP: Past Is The Past



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Kumaran Pathmanathan was the international chief of the LTTE. He was the mastermind behind the arms procurement, shipping and financial networks of the LTTE abroad. KP sustained the continuous supply of arms and ammunition by securing shipping and finance networks for over 30 years until 2003. During his sojourns abroad KP built very strong ties with the Diaspora community and his influence on them is significant.

The LTTE disintegrated after he was sidelined from the organisation in 2003. However with the escalation of the conflict Prabakaran reappointed him in January 2009 as the Chief of International Relations. Having visited more than 50 countries worldwide KP is known by many aliases. His role in the most ruthless terrorist organisation began during the latter part of the 1970s and reached its climax when he claimed himself as the leader of the LTTE following the death of Prabakaran.

KP is currently in the custody of the Government and during the past few months his persona has changed significantly. He speaks about building trust between all communities and the need for all to live together. He stresses the need to forget the past in order for the country to move forward. He becomes emotional when speaking about the past and how those living abroad are trying to mislead the community. In this discussion with Business Today, KP focuses on the importance of the Diaspora contributing to the rebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the North and East, the newly established North East Rehabilitation and Development Organisation and also the need for those living abroad to accept the ground reality. KP makes it clear that the arm struggle is over and that Eelam is not a reality. He emphasises that the past is the past.

**By Udeshi Amarasinghe | Photography by Menaka Aravinda and Mahesh Bandara**

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**We met you first on May 24, 2010 and with that discussion in mind; one year has passed since the end of the conflict, how are you contributing to the rebuilding, resettlement and reconciliation effort?**

One thing is when we look at the post conflict situation in our country we have to

work hard to bring economic opportunities to the war affected people. We need to rebuild their lives. It is with this aim that we established the North East Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (NERDO) to work and provide facilities to the conflict affected communities.

We appeal to the Diaspora to join in the rebuilding effort because they have a duty towards their brothers and sisters. Though initially the progress was slow we have the confidence that the Diaspora will accept the reality and will come and work for the betterment of the people.

### **How is NERDO working with the Government?**

As of now NERDO is only a registered organisation and we are planning to work with the Government. We need to understand that if any Non-Governmental Organisation wishes to work for the people they should cooperate with the Government. We ensure transparency in all of our activities, including financial accounts. There is no purpose of an NGO if they are corrupt or become involved in politics. We cannot do that. We are 100 percent transparent and whatever projects that we do we obtain approval from the Government. Therefore NERDO is working with the Government because if we do not cooperate we would not be able to work.

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### **What plans have been made to rebuild the North and East and how is the Diaspora engaging in these activities?**

Firstly we registered NERDO. Through this organisation we contacted the Diaspora and we mobilised our people to begin work. It was not only for funding but also for technology, expertise and planning.

Our work started in the education sector; there were those who had surrendered who were sitting for their Advance Level examinations. We assisted them with their

studies. Then, in Killinochchi we are planning to rebuild the Ramanathan Maha Vidyalayam as a model school. There are students who do not attend school due to lack of funds, therefore we allocated funds for them as well.

There are students who have gained entrance to the university and will be starting their programmes in December. They have asked us for support. We have given scholarships to almost 20 students. We also give them a monthly allowance of 3,000 rupees, but this is not free of charge. These students have to work on Saturday and Sunday and teach students from junior grades from grade five to grade seven. We have introduced this system so that the youth will learn social responsibility. We have come to an agreement with them. Thus they will receive the funding for their education but during their vacations they will have to work for the people. That is how people can rebuild their lives together.

We also have plans to build a model farm and support the farmers. They have asked for equipment such as water pumps and we are looking into providing these items. Then for fishermen we have decided to put in place a cooperative system for them so that they can purchase nets and acquire the necessary facilities to go fishing.

The project plans will be available to the public. We have the master plan and the road map in place. I feel that in three months time we will be able to show results. All the necessary information is on our website [www.nerdo.lk](http://www.nerdo.lk). We have ensured maximum transparency.

### **Will NERDO seek to work with others to assist with the development work?**

NERDO is working 100 percent on the ground and we need the support from the Government. We plan to appeal to everyone to support NERDO and whoever wishes to support are welcome to do so.

However we have our own plan and if anyone tries to use this organisation for his or her own personal gain, then we are sorry. Transparency is a must and we will cooperate with the Government 100 percent. This is for the benefit of the country

and the war affected people. We do not have a hidden agenda.

I have spoken to some personal friends who have their own businesses and they are willing to support. It is entirely our duty to rebuild the lives of the people. Everyone can contribute to rebuilding the lives of those affected by the war.

**As you know the TRO collected funds saying that it was for development. However in your visit to the North you would have seen that they have not done anything. What happened to that money and how would you say that NERDO is different?**

I do not want to go deeply into the past. But I contacted the TRO representatives who are living abroad and asked them to release the funds to NERDO. They have almost agreed and as such I am waiting for that. As I mentioned before NERDO is registered in Sri Lanka and the other thing is that it is 100 percent transparent, which you will be able to see when you visit our website – how much we collect and how much we spend and the progress of our projects. We have put these mechanisms in place because we know what happened in the past with the TRO. They did not use 100 percent of the funds collected for the people, may be a small percentage but not much.

**Now we have to use our intelligence to bring back life. We can be an example to the world and show that though once we were enemies, now we understand the war is over and we are working together.**

NERDO is totally different it has been established entirely for the people. They can come to our office and meet our staff who are willing to give answers 24 hours a day. Anyone who comes to our office will be able to see that we do not have a hidden agenda. TRO made the mistake, but because of that you cannot say that NERDO is going to make the same mistake. It is entirely for the people.

At the time the LTTE lost the war I spoke to the TRO Chief who is living in the UK and asked him to release all the accounts and start working for the people on the ground. At that time they did not cooperate with me. But this time I was able to convince them by explaining to them that the money was collected for the people

and the funds should be used for their rehabilitation. They promised that they will help NERDO and transfer the funds. I am waiting for that. I will give them some more time. At one time Dr Maheshwaran was also in charge of the TRO; we also know who is in charge of the TRO in every country. Slowly they are changing their minds. They have to answer to the people and if they do not, when the people in the Diaspora ask them what is happening they will have to answer. They cannot be like this for long. It is the people's money. They have to utilise the money for the betterment of the lives of the people. They do not have the right to keep the money.

**You work very closely with the Tamil Diaspora, can you tell us what progress has been made so far with regards to getting them to support the efforts made?**

Yes, I have worked with the Diaspora for more than 25 years. I have worked with the Tamil community all over the world from Canada to Australia. We have contacted them personally and have started work. Recently a delegation of the Diaspora visited Sri Lanka. After that visit you can see that Yogi Maheshwaran in Australia and also Father Chandranthan in Canada have accepted the work I have done to mobilise the Diaspora for rehabilitation and rebuilding of the country, especially the North and East.

Actually I would like to point out that there is a war between truth and lies; two extremes. One section repeats the lies but what we are saying is actually the truth. There are people who are talking about starting the arm struggle and unnecessarily blaming the Government in the pretext of trying to rebuild the LTTE and collect funds. This is not the way to solve the problem or rebuild the lives of our people. We have to accept the reality. The war is over. We have to unite and rebuild our people and our country.

For more than 2500 years we have been friends and brothers in this country. Some third party came and created this problem and we are the victims. Now we have to use our intelligence to bring back life. We can be an example to the world and show that though once we were enemies, now we understand the war is over and we are working together. We have to listen to what the people want on the ground. They realise that they have to live in this country and that we have to live together. This

is the reality and thus we cannot speak lies.

We cannot continue our lives on a dream, I can say 'ok, continue the arm struggle' but I do not know for how long I can speak the lie. There are sections of the Diaspora who speak in this way while living in western countries, but they need to understand that it is impossible. They have to understand the reality and the new world order. Internationally the arm struggle will never be accepted, separatism will not be accepted. It is a challenge to convince these people and I do not say it is easy but we need to work on it.

**I want to help the people. I want to make this country a noble example and we can achieve that. We are committed to achieving this goal. It is true to even my colleagues in the Diaspora.**

**Dr Maheshwaran also made very positive comments recently. He said that the LTTE had lost many chances and that they should work together with the Government. Your thoughts?**

He said the truth. He was actually part of the peace talk delegation. After the visit of the members of the Diaspora he had the courage to tell the truth. I expect the people to open their hearts. As I said the truth has to come out and he made a good move. Honest.

**You mentioned about Father Chandrakanthan, what could you tell us about him?**

Father Chandrakanthan is a former LTTE supporter. He actually lives in Canada and he is a Christian priest. He is an advisor to the committee of the trans-national government. Since the visit of the members of the Diaspora to Sri Lanka he understands the situation. He had discussions and he too said that it is a good move, which the people need. He said we have to walk together for the people. Actually just like Dr Maheshwaran his mindset was also changed. Actually the problem earlier was that if something happened in the North it would immediately be taken as racism, however every country has social issues. We have to address

social issues separately and not take it as racism.

Now that they know the ground situation people like Dr Maheshwaran, Father Chandrakanthan, the Diaspora and the intellectual people, they will not turn their backs. Dr Naren who lives in the Middle East called me and congratulated me on the good that we are doing. It is a good move and that is how we can build peace for our people.

I feel that unless they see with their own eyes they will not understand. They left the country in the 80s and they are still thinking about that time. Now it has entirely changed. It is the reality and they should see it with their own eyes. It is not 100 percent perfect, there maybe small issues but those are social issues. There was an instance where one individual was facing a problem. The Military head in Palaly called this person and told him not to worry that they will take care of him. The Diaspora should see this environment with their own eyes. That is our task to bring more members of the Diaspora so that they can see. There is no point in talking about racism and the past. We have to look at the entire country, how we are moving forward.

### **How have you changed the mindset of the Tamil Diaspora?**

Actually during the last one year I studied the situation of the Diaspora and the ground reality. The reality on the ground and the Diaspora mindset are very different. The hardcore LTTE supporters and the extremists are the ones who have mobilised the Diaspora. My first move was to show to the Diaspora the ground reality and that was a success. Actually the nine people who came to Sri Lanka they saw the reality with their own two eyes and saw what the people need and they immediately started to work. Some are working 24 hours a day in the Diaspora for this cause.

The second thing is that the Diaspora team that visited understood what the Government is doing and how the Military is helping the people. It is important that we project the accurate situation because from outside, people blame the Government and the Military. They understand and communicate when they see the truth with their own eyes.

It is a tremendous change and even I never believed that the Military has such kindness. They treat the people well and look after them. This is the truth. Some may say that the Government is helping me but it is an absolute fabrication. Even I do not know when I will be released. My life is like this but I do not care about that. My duty is to help the people. Even if I am in custody, in prison or free it is no matter. I want to help the people. I want to make this country a noble example and we can achieve that. We are committed to achieving this goal. It is true to even my colleagues in the Diaspora.

**We have to work with and educate the third generation Tamils. We plan to invite a new team... I want to ask them to join with Sinhala and Tamil students and see the reality. This is an opportunity. The problem is the lack of engagement and we are now focusing on the next move.**

**Certain sections of the Diaspora have been causing problems abroad and seem to still want the war to continue. What can be done in this regard?**

It is not the view of the majority of the Diaspora. The people who are making a noise are only a few extremists. This cannot last for long. They are speaking a lie. Everyone has realised that they are lying. This cannot stand for long. The truth will come out. May be it will take some time but it will happen. These people who lie cannot stand for long. I am saying this from the experience that I have got.

From our experience over the 35 years, what I have realised is that these people are wasting time and energy. They should join with me to rebuild the community and the country. That is what I request from them. They are wasting their energy. That is what I tell them. Another thing is that there are other countries that are taking this opportunity to cause problems and as such we should understand their intentions. We can solve our own problems. We do not need to get a third party involved. We do not need to go back and make the mistake again.

**What about third generation Tamils, who haven't even been to the country, they are propagating violence and calling for a separate state. How can we get them to think and work otherwise?**

Even at the time I was living abroad I was worried because of the message that the

hardcore activists were giving to the young people. I spoke with their parents because the children have been guided wrongly. We have to work with and educate the third generation Tamils. We plan to invite a new team, which will include third generation people so that they can come and see the reality.

I want to ask them to join with Sinhala and Tamil students and see the reality. This is an opportunity. The lives of the third generation Diaspora are very different, but the problem is the lack of engagement and we are now focusing on the next move. We can have a programme where they stay in the Wanni for one month and work with the people through NERDO and then they will be able to see with their own eyes.

**Rudrakumaran and Nediyan have been propagating the idea of separatism and the resumption of the arm struggle while living abroad. They have been silent in the recent months. What are the reasons behind their actions?**

Nediyan is nothing. He joined the movement in the 90s and his loyalty lied with Castro. I do not think about this person. Not only is there the Rudrakumaran group and Nediyan group there is Father Emmanuel, Tamilnet Jeya and also the ex-MP Jayanandamoorthy who was pushed to carry the LTTE flag and claim the Tamil Eelam separate state.

Actually, this transnational government was formed because there was a need for a democratic organisation as the LTTE was banned all over the world. That is why Jayanandamoorthy was made the coordinator of this movement. What happened during the past year is that they took a U turn. There are people pushing and threatening him, if he did not make the move he would not have been able to survive. He took the LTTE flag and he spoke about separatism. I passed the message to him through my friends that what he is doing is wrong. The purpose of forming the transnational government was different. I feel that he will realise soon. Rudrakumaran will also realise this soon and will think like Dr Maheshwaran and come back to us.

**The Government and the President himself are committed to bringing peace, equal status and self-respect. That is his vision. We have to give**

**him our support. Do not be misled. It is my humble request to everyone, to the people in this country and the Diaspora to work for the people.**

**What is your message to Rudrakumaran, Tamilnet Jeya and Jayananda Moorthy?**

I ask them to please come and join with me and work for our people. To do good for our people and not stand and criticise. Extremism cannot achieve anything. I personally invite them to come here and I will take responsibility and they will see for themselves, after which they can talk.

They are in the dark. They are still talking about continuing the arm struggle, where are we going to continue the arm struggle? In Norway or UK? The people in the Wanni will not allow the conflict to arise again. These people are talking in the UK and Norway not in Sri Lanka. They do not know the ground reality. They cannot do anything or influence even one person in the Wanni to join in the arm struggle. They are in a different world. They have to be practical and work for the people. They can only talk. They have not felt the pain of the arm struggle. The only thing they do is just sit and talk, but we work for 24 hours.

Prabakaran, myself and other colleagues we worked together and we sacrificed a lot. Now all of them are dead. At that time we thought we were doing the right thing for our people. These people who live abroad and criticise or write something; they do not know the pain. I have a lot of pain, my sister and my brother, they are dead. My parents, they are dead. My brothers are in the rehabilitation centres. I have a lot of pain. I had many people around me but today I am alone. The LTTE was my family, I lost everyone, my friends and my family. Now again they are talking about an arm struggle, what is that? Are they joking? If they talk about an arm struggle again I will be the first person to say no. Not only in Sri Lanka even abroad and also to the others I will tell them, if anyone wants to start an arm struggle again I will be the first to say no. No more arm struggle and separatism in this country. No more pain. For what?

**What is your message to the Diaspora?**

I request the members of the Diaspora to please visit Sri Lanka and see with their own eyes and decide for themselves. If you cannot come then please visit the NERDO website and understand the situation that we need rehabilitation and reconciliation. The Government and the President himself are committed to bringing peace, equal status and self-respect. That is his vision. We have to give him our support. Do not be misled. It is my humble request to everyone to the people in this country and the Diaspora to work for the people.

**You mentioned that people think that you are treated as a VIP and that you live in luxury. What can you tell us about this?**

I can say that the Opposition parties always make claims like this. On one side they are right, the Government treats me very well. How? Actually it is the human touch. The Government has given me security but I am under house arrest.

In the beginning I thought these people are my enemy, but then when I met the Defence Secretary and started to talk I saw the humanity in him. The Defence Secretary spoke very nicely to me and though I had a very different perception it has changed, I do not have fear but much respect for him as he has a clear vision. I am happy with the environment. The Government has given me this opportunity. From this, happiness is the only important thing and I have that happiness. It is not like spending money, kindness comes from the heart. The Government never gave me any special treatment or priority. I am a normal man and a citizen of this country, the security is there and I get normal food and medication.

**What is your relationship with the Government?**

I have to prove myself first that I can produce results and thereafter work closely with the Government. It is part of the work. If we think about the positive approach we can win over the heart, and we do not need to do anything else. That is the positive approach for the past one year that I have been applying to my life. This is a way that we can solve any issues. If we focus on the negative aspect then we cannot win over hearts. It is anger that brings all the bad things, thus we have to think positively.

**From your visit to the North, what are the views of the people?**

The people have realised one thing; that is we have to live in this country and we need to live with the majority of the people in order to rebuild our lives. This is their thinking and they do not want a separate state and they know the arm struggle is over.

If we look at rehabilitation and the economic problems in this post conflict environment, it is a challenge but we cannot expect to solve these issues in a short period. That is in the world experience. I am very happy with what the Government is doing. If we want the relief work to move faster then the Diaspora has to start working. I have formed the bridge between the Diaspora and the Government. That is what we are doing now. In the Wanni area especially, they have difficulties and economic hardships, but we have to make plans and proceed with the projects. We have to give the life back to the people and I feel that we can do that soon.

**Tamil political parties and the Diaspora are expecting everything from the Government. But firstly they are not united - the Tamil political parties and also the Diaspora. However the ordinary Tamils are living peacefully. What can you say about that?**

Each political party is different and their policies vary. But at some point they have to unite for the benefit of the people. For example the TNA may have a different policy but they should work with other political parties for the betterment of the people. The same thing applies to the Diaspora and I have requested that from them. But unfortunately it did not happen. May be it is because of their ego or they are being misguided by different parties, I do not know. My vision and request is that they should come together. The people were affected for 30 years. They need a life. The Diaspora and the political parties should work together at least for five years. Then they can talk. If they genuinely want to work for the people they have to unite.

**They have to work for the people. They did not start until now. I have my courage and duty to work for the people. They are talking from overseas. They are not on the ground. Who is suffering?  
The people.**

Actually Rudrakumaran was my friend. I passed the message to him before I started

NERDO. I told him that I am going to work for the people that is before I was arrested, because there is no use in only talking without understanding the ground reality. They have to work for the people. They did not start until now. I have my courage and duty to work for the people. They are talking from overseas. They are not on the ground. Who is suffering? The people.

### **Do you genuinely feel that the Tamil political parties will ever unite?**

It is a difficult question to answer but I feel they have to be united if they are genuinely going to help the people. I am under custody and I do not have money but we started NERDO and I collected money from my friends and everywhere and now people can see their children go to school because we have bought them shoes and bags. Not a big amount, about 100. Then about 400 students are sitting for their Advance Level examinations and we made arrangements for them too. This is my vision.

The Tamil political parties have been staying in this country for a long time and doing politics. Why can't they do more than this? That is why I feel they are not working for the people. They should work and then criticise. They take photographs of people suffering. I asked the university students what have you done during the last year for the people. You can come here on vacation and make a small house and help them. You do not do anything, you just criticise. This is not the right way, we have to be of service to the people. It is my wish to live in Vavuniya and help the people. This is what Gandhi did before independence in India. I expect the Tamil parties to be like this.

You are the MPs elected by the people, you are the representatives and have the mandate and you have the opportunity to work with the Government. But you are only talking. As MPs, stay in Vavuniy and work – build a cottage for the people. How can we expect unity when they are not working for the people. I am working for the people for their betterment that is why I am talking to the Diaspora after we lost the military war. What is the future of the Tamil people? We have to have a common plan. I personally called Mavai Sendhiraja of the TNA to come and meet the Diaspora abroad. We do not have a hidden agenda. I do not need politics. I may have only a few years in my life and I want to see the people live in happiness. The way we can get the happiness is when we see the happiness in the poor people's

smile.

### **How can we build trust among the various communities?**

This will take a little time. We should organise some projects and have a master plan. We have to build trust. For example in Thailand they had a problem in the South but they built the trust and they started working together in the community. The same thing happened in Malaysia and Singapore.

A basic structure is already in place and the Defence Secretary already has it planned out, focusing on the Sri Lankan identity and equal status for all people living in Sri Lanka. When I watched the cricket match the other day I saw the Sri Lankan cricket team say 'we are Sri Lankan' that is very good. I saw this same move in Malaysia and it is very good.

Rebuilding and unity, that is my dream as well. Every community should unite, be one - we are Sri Lanka. The Defence Secretary has already initiated the project and started work and we will continue that. That is why I have asked the third generation to come to Sri Lanka. That is why I want them to meet Sinhalese students and exchange their views. This is the way we can rebuild our lives.

I must say one thing, the media thinks only about the negative factor. We can write the positive aspect as well because that is also journalism. The media should tell the truth and positive things to the public. What is going on in the Wanni is a positive thing. When there is a problem then we can sit and discuss and solve whatever problems. No need to focus only on the negative aspects. You cannot have it 100 percent perfect everywhere. If we think of what is best for the country we can make up our mind. Everyone has a duty, political party and the media. They focus only on the small things. They do not think that the people are working very hard 24 hours a day, how they are helping the people and doing good for the country.

**A Basic Structure Is Already In Place And The Defence Secretary Already Has It Planned Out, Focusing On The Sri Lankan Identity And Equal Status For All People Living In Sri Lanka. When I Watched The Cricket Match The Other Day I Saw The Sri Lankan Cricket Team Say 'We Are Sri Lankan', That Is Very Good.**

To build the economy we need stability. Foreign investment should come, because without foreign investment there would be no economic development. Foreign investment will come if the country is stable. The country is stable now because the war is over. Now every party needs to work for the people under the leadership of the President. I mean all communities are already living together in other parts of the country. It is for the country's benefit. The people have been suffering for a long time. I feel everybody should work together. I am not involved in politics but I feel that the country and the people should be happy.

### **Can you tell us about how you have changed over the past year?**

Actually, it was not during the last year but I understood the reality from September 11, 2001. The world order changed. I spoke with my colleagues and told them that we cannot gain anything by fighting. I realised that we had to solve our problem by ourselves. For example, in our family matters, we have to solve our problems within. We cannot go and ask a third party to solve our problems. In our country, we have a problem. We have to solve our problem ourselves. We have to sit and talk. This is the way we can resolve issues.

We think about the last six years. But, why don't we think about the last 2500 years. We lived together in this country. We are brothers and sisters and we are friends. Then why can't we live together? In Colombo, people are living together. It is the same thing in Canada. 300,000 Tamils are living with the Canadian people - French speaking people and English speaking people. They are together. It is the same in France - 100,000 Tamils are living with other communities. How do they tolerate? How do they live together? In Britain and Australia it is the same. Why can't we live together in Sri Lanka? India is a good example of how different communities are living together. Why can't we achieve that? Otherwise, we are going to be the same as dinosaurs. If we don't accept the reality and if we don't change, if we don't have the flexibility, one day Tamils in Sri Lanka will be extinct like dinosaurs.

Therefore from 2001, I started to think of how we can solve this problem. That is why I also initiated the peace talks during that time. Unfortunately, this all happened. We don't really think about the past much. We think about the future. The next generation - how we are going to give them better things. Why did we

study in the university? From our education, from our past experience, we should use in an intelligent way. There is no use in looking at things through a racism glass. We should look through a clear glass and see how we can solve the problems ourselves.

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**You said that your views changed since 2001, can you elaborate on this?**

From 2001, after 9/11 America categorised all the separatist organisations under one basket – Terrorist. The entire world started to coordinate, with each other. Even Russia, China and America started to work together against terrorism. We were the most affected organisation even more than the Al Qaeda. We could not survive in that environment.

Then if you look at the neighbouring country, India, their government changed and they started cooperating with the President. China and Pakistan became more active as well. We were alone. Then Balasingham came here I think it was when they were going to Japan for talks. The LTTE did not agree to the peace talks, but Balasingham tried to explain to them the difficulties because we were already in the peace process. If we did not go, the world would be against that. He tried very hard but he lost hope. At that time he spoke to me and said we have to convince the leadership and explain to them and participate in all peace talks. But he couldn't and he told these people that they do not understand the reality. The whole world is going to knock us out and everyone is going to die. Those were his own words. There were others who were there at that time who heard this as well.

You see today, Dr Maheshwaran's statement. From January 2009, when the LTTE appointed me as the international coordinator, we started to work – Dr Maheshwaran, Rudra, and myself and we met the Norwegian delegation. Rudra, Maheshwaran and specially those from Canada were all of the same view – that we cannot win the war and we cannot achieve anything. Only way was to end the war.

We met the Norwegian Ambassador in Malaysia. I asked their point of view. They said that if things went smoothly with the peace talks we could achieve some kind of settlement. Maybe the federation, that could have been a good chance but we missed the bus. Even those who worked towards peace, who were involved in the peace talks were of the same view. Unfortunately the LTTE members on the ground did not understand the reality.

Who broke the ceasefire and started the war? It is the LTTE. Then the LTTE will lose, that was the thinking at that time. They said that. If we do not understand the reality, if we do not start to work for the ground reality, we will be the same as the dinosaur. That is the truth. Peace is more difficult than arm struggle. We are a small tiny country we are not Russia or any other big country but a small population. We have enough education. When Lee Kwan Yew visited Sri Lanka he said that it is a classic model for independence. Malaysia and Singapore learned a lot from us. Somewhere we went wrong and we came to this situation.

We need to focus on the children and the younger generation. Give them the guidelines and build the country and live peacefully.

### **Was the LTTE serious about the peace talks?**

No they were not.

**If you look at our culture, really, we have to go back and rebuild. The war has changed the culture. Our women never used to lift even a stick but they had to use guns. Unfortunately the war made them do this. We have to rebuild our culture.**

### **When you went to the Wanni and spoke to the Tamils, do you not think the Tamils suffered more under the LTTE?**

The Tamil suffered because of the war. Unfortunately I did not get the opportunity to visit the Wanni when it was under LTTE control however when I spoke to the people I got the message from the people that their lives are much better now than when the LTTE was controlling the area.

**The Tamil people have a very rich culture but because of this war, the culture has been destroyed what can you say about this?**

If you look at our culture, really, we have to go back and rebuild. The war has changed the culture. Our women never used to lift even a stick but they had to use guns. Unfortunately the war made them do this. We have to rebuild our culture.

**You said you are not interested in politics, what is your future role?**

To rebuild the lives of the war affected people, educate the younger generation and work towards the unity of this country. Achieve permanent peace in this country. I do not think that it is advisable to be involved in politics because I can do much more work, this way. My future is very clear. I am working for the people.

**In all the districts you find all the communities living together they have equal status. What are your thoughts on that?**

The President also pointed out that he is working towards all communities living together in peace. Also, in India, Singapore, Malaysia and many countries different communities are living together in happiness. Why can't we? I mean in Colombo, how are they living together? The people understand this. May be they need a little more time and we have to focus on that. People are slowly changing their minds. I do not like to mix with politics. The President is very clear. He has said that everyone in this country is equal. They will have their own.

The President is committed to solve the national issues and he is the person to do that. We have a 60 year long history and we do not need to think about that. We do not have to look at the past. We have to look at the future of Sri Lanka. The President is always committed and we should support his move. People should be behind him and I hope the people understand that and it is our duty to bring that peaceful environment.

**The country is moving forward now and in your opinion what lies ahead of us?**

This is the reality now. The war is over. The concern of everyone is to improve his or her life. Most of the time we are thinking of how we can increase our production in this country. The country should establish stability and that is being done already. If the Opposition if they are thinking about the country they have to work together. A 30 year war and 60 year political issue makes the country go down. The Opposition parties including the Tamil parties have to work together to bring stability and economic development. They have to work for the people. The people should be happy. Initially we talk about the war, why are we at the different corners and talk about negative things? Now is the time to move forward.





