

# AN UNTIMELY DEATH A COMMEMORATION OF K. KANTHASAMY





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K. KANTHASAMY

KANTHASAMY COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE  
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## INTRODUCTION

Compiling this commemoration volume has proved a deeply painful exercise, yet at the same time a profoundly rewarding one. The flood of grief and anguish at Kanthasamy's loss, never far below the surface, rose up afresh on reading each message or article that came in. The totality is something far more than simply a collection of tributes to one man. It is a sharing and a pooling of sorrow; each contributor, reading the whole, will find some solace that so many others feel the same, and have articulated, in their very different ways, a similar perception of Kanthasamy as a human being, and the same sense of despair at his loss.

If, by some miracle, Kanthasamy were to reappear safe and sound, how embarrassed he would be by this publication! I can think of nothing else that might provoke this gentle soul, who never betrayed emotion, to voice his fury at the action of his friends. How gladly we would bear his censure! But we have given up hoping for this particular miracle. That hope has died, not swiftly and cleanly, but by the worst of deaths—long drawn out, filled with uncertainties, painful, lingering.

It is now necessary to place on record, and bring into the public domain, information about Kanthasamy's life, and work, and end. One of the most upsetting circumstances following Kanthasamy's abduction and presumed death is the absence of

widespread popular outrage among the people for whom he laboured with so much dedication. But this is not surprising, nor can the people be blamed. It is understandable, because though the beneficiaries of Kanthasamy's work numbered hundreds of thousands, those who knew of it were comparatively few

A commemoration volume is usually intended to ensure that a person's life and work is not forgotten. In the case of Kanthasamy the situation is different. What is not known cannot be forgotten. The unassuming and modest nature of this man, and the discipline he imposed on himself and on those with whom he worked, meant that only his close friends and associates knew both the extent and the quality of his labours. Even in such circles, knowledge was limited. Kanthasamy was by no means a secretive man, he was frank and open. But he was just not one to talk about himself. This meant that he was not in the habit of recounting what he had been doing, of seeking either the reassurance or the approbation of his friends, or of simply indulging in the pleasure of letting another share his experiences, his hopes, his anxieties. Only if such discussion was directly relevant to joint work in hand would it take place.

This volume, then, is not merely a sharing of their grief among friends



and co-workers, but also of their knowledge of Kanthasamy. The latter is by no means complete. There are doubtless many more whom the compilers failed to reach and who could have sketched in their own special details to the general picture. There is also much that cannot be written of now, some of it perhaps never, for reasons of professional confidentiality, or the special responsibility to respect confidences that arises in human rights work. The remarkable contributions that follow nevertheless add up to a considerable amount, and Kanthasamy lives again in the pages of this book.

Kandiah Kanthasamy was born on 6th. April, 1930, in the village of Maviddapuram, Jaffna, educated at Jaffna Hindu College, and graduated in Mathematics at the University of Ceylon in Colombo. After a short spell as a school teacher, Kanthasamy qualified as a lawyer, and practised in the field of commercial and company law. When well on the way to the peak of an outstanding legal career, he started instead to devote his time and talents to work in the areas of human rights and organising practical assistance to persons displaced and dispossessed by the internal conflicts that ravaged Sri Lanka in the late 1970s. Kanthasamy's vision of justice and freedom knew no narrow boundaries. Through his dedicated work in the Civil Rights Movement he promoted the human rights of all Sri Lankans; in his active membership of Amnesty International he sought to help victims of human rights violations in the rest of the world. The main focus of his work was, however, relief and rehabilitation in the North and East. He was

engaged in full time work in this field when he was abducted in Jaffna on 19th June, 1988.

Is it, then, simply to do justice to the contribution to humanity of a great and good man that this publication is conceived? It could be felt, with some justification, that this is a luxury which the present sad situation in our country cannot afford, and that the best memorial to Kanthasamy, indeed to any outstanding humanitarian, is to just carry on with his work.

Had Kanthasamy died a different death, perhaps this book would not have appeared, and he would have been mourned, as he lived, quietly, without publicity. But the quality and style of Kanthasamy's work, taken together with the events of the last few weeks of his life, and the circumstances of his loss, raise a whole series of important questions, that transcend the fate of one individual.

Kanthasamy was totally non-partisan. He believed that relief and rehabilitation work should be conducted after identifying priorities carefully, and according to proper standards and accepted procedures. While recognising the need to have rapport with various political agencies whether governmental or others, Kanthasamy was adamant that the independence of a non governmental organisation engaged in such humanitarian work must be preserved, and must not be subject to political pressures, from whatever quarter they may come. "If we cannot carry on as a free organisation we should close it down" was what he wrote shortly before his abduction.

On a visit to London in November, 1987, I tried hard to persuade Kanthasamy to delay his return to Sri Lanka until the confused situation in the North and East became clearer. But he was adamant. During the six months that he worked in 1988 he did extensive field work in the North and East. He saw me on his brief visits to Colombo. He looked so relaxed and happy to be back at the work he loved, he was so truly the exile come home, I felt guilty that I had ever tried to dissuade him. On his last visit, he told me of the threats made to him (documented in Part III of this book). He was told that relief and rehabilitation work in the area should only be undertaken in accordance with the directions of a particular militant group, and that he would be ignoring this warning at his peril. I did not take these threats seriously. How could anyone think of killing such a man?

The terrible fact remains that he was abducted a few days later, and there has been no trace of him since. The problems he faced in his last recorded weeks in Jaffna raise issues of grave and wide im-

port. What is the role of the moderate, non partisan activist in human rights and relief work in Sri Lanka today? What is the role of the truly independent non-governmental organisation in this field? Traditionally, threats have been seen to come from the State, one has learned to cope with and to live with such dangers. How do individuals and organisations now face up to new threats from other and hitherto unexpected quarters?

Everyone concerned with human rights and relief work must face up to and discuss these issues. Most important, the public must be made aware of them. For in the last analysis it is the responsibility of the people to decide on and demand the standards they expect of their leaders, and the nature of the society in which they aspire to live.

**Suriya Wickremasinghe  
Kanthasamy Commemoration  
Committee.**

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## **PART ONE**

# **ABOUT KANTHASAMY**

**Articles about and tributes to Kanthasamy**

PART ONE

ABOUT RANTHAMBUR

THE HISTORY AND PRESENT STATE OF THE

## ONE OF THOSE RARE PEOPLE

Manel Fonseka

"An untimely death." How tragically commonplace those words have become in our country today. So many, many people have been killed, dying "before their time", that it is scarcely possible any longer to react to each new announcement, however young or innocent the victim, however cruel the manner of death. As the poet said, "human kind cannot bear very much reality". And for some of us the reality of life in Sri Lanka has become so terrible that we are driven to close our eyes and stop our ears in order to preserve our sanity, or because we feel impotent in the face of the forces that have been unleashed.

But Kanthasamy (whom I came to know through work in the Civil Rights Movement) was one of those rare people whose courage and commitment to human rights, to the displaced, to the forgotten, to those denied justice, never wavered, were never compromised by thoughts of self-preservation or despair. At great personal risk he pursued his humanitarian tasks to the very end of his life, in his characteristically quiet and undemonstrative manner — an end against which all of us must cry out in anger and horror, not least because of its callous and casual anonymity.

In April 1983, Kanthasamy (who had no wish to be anywhere other than in Sri Lanka) happened to be abroad. Had he been here he would probably have been taken into custody ("on suspicion") in connection with his relief and rehabilitation work and brutally killed in Welikade — along with that other humanitarian worker, Dr. Rajasundaram. Even then, it was with great difficulty that Kantha was

restrained from returning home by those who were more concerned for his safety than he was, and who persuaded him that there was also important work which could be done abroad by a person of his experience and integrity. But he hated being away from Sri Lanka. The advantages and pleasures of life in advanced cosmopolitan Europe held little attraction for him. His was not a glamorous self-imposed exile, but an exile under protest, and though the years abroad were solely devoted to the cause of human rights in Sri Lanka, and in particular to those of the displaced among the beleaguered Tamil community, it was clear that Kantha longed to return home.

Visiting him in a London hospital in August 1984, soon after he had undergone a heart bypass operation, I found him grey and weak—an invalid. I thought that he would perhaps spend the rest of his life working quietly, safeguarding his health, writing reports and briefing foreign organisations, ultimately succumbing to the expatriate syndrome. It would have been quite understandable if he had done so. He chose instead to return home and plunge into the fray, just where his courage and integrity would be put to their severest test.

Kantha was one of three remarkable people I was privileged to know in the CRM, who met with untimely deaths. "Untimely", because they were snatched away at a moment when such men are so greatly needed, and so sadly lacking. Each of them was labouring for human rights and justice at the time of his death. Each of them was unsparing of himself in

his work for others. Each one's death was a bereavement not only for family, friends and colleagues, but also for thousands of others whose lives were in some way affected by their work. And more than this, each death was a bereavement for the whole country, which can be proud to have produced such men, but not confident that it will continue to do so.

The deaths of Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe in October 1983, and S. Nadesan QC, in December 1986, guiding spirits and leading activists in the CRM, grieved me deeply. I knew them well, loved them both and was diminished by their leaving. But I did grieve and gradually moved to acceptance of the inevitable. Kanthasamy's death is something different altogether. He was more a colleague, and that only for a short time, than a close friend, but a colleague in the field of human rights which itself engenders particular feelings of admiration, affection and comradeship even after slight acquaintance. For Kantha our mourning can never be over, completed, our grief can never attain catharsis, as the certainty and finality of his death is absent. For months after the abduction we continued to hope (though I, for one, with little faith, all too familiar by then with the pattern of "disappearances") that he was still alive, somewhere. When a person "disappears", family and friends are stunned, shocked, frightened, but long to believe that the loved one is still alive. Their instinct is to try every means possible to trace him or her, but they hold back for fear that their very efforts to save the loved one will precipitate death. They move circumspectly, wondering all the time whether they should be bolder.

They are caught in a terrible conflict—to move or not to move, to identify the abductors or to pretend they do not know who they are, giving them a chance to release their victim without loss of face and with impunity. In CRM we are familiar with the special suffering caused by the "disappearance", have come close to the tragedies of some families who have enlisted our assistance over several years, as they continue to search for a "disappeared" child, father or husband, refusing to accept what most suspect but no one will confirm. I, personally, have come to regard the "disappearance" as the most heinous of human rights violations, with its devastating, prolonged effect on the victim's family.

Kanthasamy's abduction is in effect a "disappearance", with the only difference that the forces of the state cannot be held responsible. We must treat him as dead, though we may never know the day and manner of his death. And because we do not know these things and do not want to believe that he is dead, we will never be able to grieve properly or be able to finally assuage our grief. Perhaps, however, we can find some slight consolation in the fact that if, despite the violence, cruelty and despair into which we have seen our country plunge, it has still produced men of the calibre of Kanthasamy, then all is not lost.

The value and manner of Kanthasamy's life will never be forgotten by those who knew him and his sacrifice of himself will remain a standard by which many of us will come to measure ourselves.

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Manel Fonseka is a documentalist and writer in the fields of human rights and architectural history.



## A TRIBUTE TO MR. K. KANTHASAMY

C. B. Bavinck

It is a privilege for me to pay a tribute to Mr. Kanthasamy's memory because I had a great respect and liking for him. In retrospect I think this was caused mainly by three of his characteristics:

First of all, and this was something which struck one almost immediately in Mr. Kanthasamy, there was his rectitude, his straightness and reliability. It is not often that one meets with people of whom the most outstanding characteristic is rectitude. Somehow Mr. Kanthasamy was able to convey that impression of absolute integrity within the shortest possible time by the way he bore himself, always very straight, the way he spoke and the way he acted. One very quickly knew that here was a person in whom there was no deceit.

A second outstanding characteristic was his sense of commitment. He was someone who subordinated his own interest and well-being to the cause he had chosen to serve. He did this very un-ostentatiously but at the same time very systematically. His commitment in the later phase of his life was to the well-being of the Tamil people. Even though this commitment of his was so strong, or should we say exactly because it was

so strong and so deep, it remained possible for Sinhalese friends to appreciate it, yes, to respect and support it. It never became parochial and narrow.

This was true also in another sense. His commitment was to the people and not in the first place to institutions which were set up to serve this purpose, even if he had started them himself. He always remained capable of distinguishing between the means and the end and so he remained a person, committed yet free.

Lastly I remember his sense of humour. It was a very special kind of humour, dry as his voice could be. But it had an astonishing effect because it gave this very straight and very committed person a human touch, which evoked a feeling of affection.

It will be impossible to forget Mr. Kanthasamy. One year after his disappearance one can still feel the sadness that someone of such character could not have lived and made further contributions to his people and to the Sri Lankan nation as a whole. But this sadness is also personal in that we will not have the privilege of meeting this very distinctive and admirable person again. May he rest in peace!

C. B. Bavinck was for a long time associated with Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai.

## **PAINSTAKING DEVOTION TO PRACTICAL MATTERS**

**Nigel S. Rodley**

I am indebted to you for being given the opportunity to say a few words to commemorate the inspiring life of K. Kanthasamy, who has been so cruelly removed from us.

Much human rights work is unglamorous, requiring commitment and painstaking devotion to practical matters, and no aspect of this work was too insignificant to elicit his interest. indeed his enthusiastic collaboration He was a prominent member of our Sri Lankan Section. Yet his idea of a holiday between two major international meetings, at which he was to represent his section, was to come and work for a few weeks in this Legal Office.

He helped plan our participation in an important UN meeting (the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders). He then went on

to help us prepare a detailed review of the statutes of all our national sections, the sort of mundane stuff that is necessary to help a voluntary international organization to work effectively. His hard working cheerful demeanour made him a most agreeable colleague to all those who had the pleasure of working with him.

The pleasant memories of collaboration and friendship help mitigate, if only partially, the deep sense of loss and horror engendered by his appalling fate.

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**Nigel S. Rodley is Head of the Legal and Inter-governmental Organisations Office of the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London.**

## KANTHASAMY WAS AND WILL REMAIN — A MAHATMA

Fr. A. Bernard

"Good work would be a greater example than noisy propagation of ideologies."

"The important principle is: publish only the truth."

These are quotations from two letters of Mr. Kanthasamy: the first about relief activities and the other about human rights work.

If as the Chairman mentioned this is a special meeting, then the person in whose honour it is held must also be special. But it has been said of Mr. Kanthasamy, in fact, it is still being said by some, that he is a swindler, a traitor. Is he then being an imposter in preaching about "active work" and the "principle of truth"? If he is then we are deluded in convening this special meeting in his honour. But is he?

Although my initial contact with him was eleven years ago, in the context of relief work by the TRRO (Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation) for the victims of the 1977 pogrom and the Sansoni Commission it was here in London, in connection with the CBF (Central British Fund for Tamil Refugees) and the TIC (Tamil Information Centre) that I came to know him closely. It is in the light of the work at these institutions, namely relief and human rights work, that I would like to answer the question I raised a moment ago.

Mr. Kanthasamy was the prime mover of the CBF (formed in 1978) and the TIC (1983). The CBF was engaged in submitting proposals of relief projects to funding agencies in Europe and other countries outside Sri Lanka and channelling the funds to relief organisations at home, mainly to the TRRO. He was not only their prime mover but also the dynamism. Raising funds is not an easy or pleasant task. It requires humility to assume the role of the beggar; initiative to hunt for likely donors; perseverance when appeals are not responded to; patience when they are turned down; accurate accounting of funds received and spent; and periodic submission of progress reports. All this meant hard work, not only in the form of office work but also in that of travelling, meeting donor agencies and pleading for assistance. Hundreds of applications were submitted to donor agencies starting from the wake of the 1983 pogrom. Initially the response was meagre: only three such agencies were forthcoming with assistance. But Mr Kanthasamy would not despair. It was to be more than a year before he would see the green signal of a fourth donor agency and by 1987 the support of over twentyfive such organisations had been won from many countries like Australia, Austria, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden.



Some of the major projects run were:

1. Relief for Victims of Violence;
2. Emergency Medical Aid;
3. Relief for Displaced Fishermen;
4. Care and Rehabilitation of Families who lost their Breadwinners;
5. Medical Aid Project and Relief for Refugees in India.

If eventually the CBF was able to collect over a million pounds for relief work, it was largely due to the untiring efforts of Mr. Kanthasamy. It is not so much this sum of money that speaks about the man, but his feeling of oneness with the suffering victims of violence. It was this feeling of oneness which drove him to spend his time and energy working for their relief.

Following the heart attack which he suffered in 1983 and the open heart surgery in '84, the condition of his health became so poor that the doctors warned him that travelling during rush hours itself could have serious consequences on his life-span.

But undaunted, he continued his routine of an average of 14 hours of work every day of the year without any holiday, commuting between Rayners Lane and Clapham. It was seldom that he left the office before 10 o'clock in the evening. For instance on the 31st of December 1986, he worked in the office until 11.30 at night in order to telex a relief project to a funding agency because the following day was the deadline for the submission of the project. He maintained the same intensity of work also after his return home this January, again paying little heed to his own health. He travelled by bus from district to district, visiting Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna...with a view to obtaining first hand information about

the needs of the suffering masses, working towards increased co-ordination among all NGOs and drawing up project proposals. Within the short span of five months, he had quite a number of such proposals approved by foreign organisations for funding. Taking Mannar alone, that is leaving out his projects for districts like Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna, he had drawn up following projects:

1. Supply of Agricultural implements for affected farmers of Mannar.
2. Supply of seed paddy, fertilizer and agro-chemicals for use by the affected farmers in Mannar for the 1988/89 cultivation season;
3. Mannar affected farmers highland cultivation project;
4. Mannar affected farmers cattle upgrading project;
5. Supply of Plants Project for Mannar affected farmers;
6. Poultry-keeping programme for Mannar affected women;
7. Mannar district women's organization programme;
8. Mannar fisheries service centre.

These projects involved millions of rupees and would benefit thousands of families. "Good work", he said, "would be a greater example than noisy propagation of ideologies."

What I have said so far tell us about the man's capacity for work. But one has to ask why he worked so hard. What was his own personal gain? Was it money? But all the money he would receive in return for his work was only his train fare to the office. When a donor agency insisted that he should accept a salary, his reply was, "It is my principle that so long as I am engaged in collecting funds, I should not take



from the collection any money for myself". And being the meticulous man he was, he maintained strict accounting of the funds collected. A strange breed of swindler, that is, if a swindler he was.

Was fame his gain, or political power? Were that the case we would have seen his name and activities flashed in the news media. On the contrary he was so humble and self-effacing that he shunned publicity and would rather let others get the credit for the good deeds he himself had done.

There is no doubt in my mind that his sole motive in all that he did was the good of others, particularly the suffering, the orphans, the widows, the victims of torture and rape and the like.

It was the same qualities of hard work, selfless dedication and integrity that he displayed also in his work at the TIC which involved human rights work. His involvement in the field of human rights goes back to the early seventies when Tamil youths began to be tortured. Later, it was he who successfully brought about the English weekly 'The Saturday Review' which he said was necessary for raising awareness in the South of Sri Lanka and the international community about the plight of the Tamils. He believed that the rights of every human being should be respected and protected whether it be a Tamil or Sinhalese or anyone else. Thus he became a member of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) and Amnesty International, Sri Lanka.

And at the TIC, his inspiration and assistance were required in all sections of its activities: building up the information network in Sri Lanka and other parts of the world, gathering information on a daily basis from Sri Lanka and India, cross-checking the information and editing it for dissemination, relaying it to the foreign press and media and then following these up to correct any misinformation made by them, sorting the collected information for suitable targets giving interviews to visitors of various nationalities and professions, supplying information packages to Tamil activists, foreign NGOs and pressure groups, preparing documents for the sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, publication of periodicals and monographs etc. The way Mr. Kanthasamy worked combining quantity with quality was beyond belief. Thanks to his labour and integrity, the TIC came to be accredited by a number of international organisations as a credible and efficient organisation. "The important principle", said he, "is to publish only the truth". Indeed that is what he genuinely strove to do: to ensure as far as humanly possible that the information gathered and disseminated was objective and true.

If through such activities, the plight of the Tamils was publicised and international pressure was brought to bear on the Sri Lankan Government to desist from the genocide of Tamils, then Mr. Kanthasamy deserves the gratitude of many: they unbeknown to him and he unbeknown to them, and yet he spent his life for no gain of his, but solely theirs. A strange breed of traitor, that is, traitor if he was!

During my formative years to the priesthood and otherwise, a number of people have left a deep impression on me. But Mr. Kanthasamy franks among the ten I would say who have had the deepest impact on my life; and that, not by any eloquence of words but by the sheer strength of his character.

There was many a day when I used to wonder at the mystery of this man, a man of integrity, a man who would disregard his health and work for no reward, (and what a capacity for work!), a man who could have enjoyed popularity and power but chose to remain anonymous, a man so austere, so selfless, so forgiving...!

And now I wonder why ever they did this to him; why ever they kid-napped him! Would they not acknowledge that what they owed him was gratitude, not violence? Could they

not see that they were depriving thousands of Tamils living in misery, nay the entire Tamil community, of a great soul, a Mahatma?

Yes, to those of us who had the privilege of knowing the richness of his character and immensity of his contribution to the upliftment of society, that is what Mr. Kanthasamy was and will remain —a Mahatma!

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**Extended version of a speech delivered in London in September 1988 by Fr.A. Bernard, who performed voluntary service at the Tamil Information Centre in London till the time of its closure.**



# THE SANSONI COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

## *Manivasagan Underwood*

I have been asked to write a note to honour the memory of K. Kanthasamy, lawyer, human rights activist and social worker. I can think of no better way of doing this than to remind ourselves of the way in which he responded to the situation in the country in general and to the plight of the Tamils in particular during and after the race riots of 1977.

In the early years of this century the great Russian liberator Vladimir Lenin observed "since it is given to man to live but once he must so live that .....dying he can say all my life and all my work was devoted to the finest cause of all the liberation of mankind" Kantha appears to have taken that advice and applied it, with the limitation imposed by geography and history, to his own role in the situation that emerged in Sri Lanka in the 1970s and 1980s. Kantha's humanitarian work was widespread and varied. In this note I describe just one example of it, that connected with the Sansoni Commission of Inquiry.

The "disturbances" of 1977 coming within two decades of the first widespread anti-Tamil race riots of 1958 posed several problems for Tamils everywhere in Sri Lanka. Almost all were affected by the need felt by many Tamils to flee from non Tamil areas to the safety of the North and East. With the memories of 1958 not far away many Tamils found themselves wondering what the future held for them and where the solution to the ethnic conflict lay.

It was at this stage that Kanthasamy, a competent and promising

lawyer, decided to step in and help both in the immediate plight of the Tamils directly affected by the violence and in the search for a political solution to the problems of race relations in Sri Lanka

Realising the enormity of the situation they were faced with in August/September 1977 in helping to save the lives and property of those affected by racial violence, Kantha and his friends like K. C. Nythianathan formed the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation (TRRO).

It was from this time that Kantha, then an established lawyer in his late 40s with an outstanding career in the field of commercial law ahead of him, began devoting his entire life and work to helping the victims of violence in the agony they were going through. He asked for no reward, wanted no publicity for whatever he was doing, expected no thanks from anybody, and sought no political office or position. Being a strong character he was content and satisfied to have the approval of his own self.

When the Sansoni Commission of Inquiry was appointed to inquire into and report on the circumstances and causes of the August/September 1977 incidents, to recommend measures to assist those affected and to prevent a recurrence of such incidents. Kantha as Secretary of the TRRO threw himself wholeheartedly into the task of placing material before the Commission relating to the matters under inquiry.

Even before Mr. M. C. Sansoni began his sittings early in 1978, Kantha

as Secretary of the TRRO made available to the Commission computerised summaries of statements recorded by the TRRO from displaced persons in refugee camps, together with summaries of others forwarded to the TRRO in response to TRRO newspaper advertisements, as well as statements and data prepared by the Association of Affected Tamil Officers with whom the TRRO was in constant communication. More than 10,000 such statements were recorded and collected under these heads.

Kantha spared no pains in ensuring that the government and the people of this country had as full a knowledge as possible of what had happened and was continuing to happen to Tamils in Sri Lanka.

It was Kantha who organised a panel of lawyers (regardless of party affiliations) to place material and lead oral and documentary evidence at the Sansoni Commission sittings in Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Kandy, Trincomalee and Colombo. There were 280 sittings stretching over a period of two years. Over 900 witnesses were examined on oath and cross-examined or re-examined by either the State Counsel attached to the Commission, or by the counsel for the Tamil Groups or those appearing for the Sinhala Peramunas. Hundreds of documents were also produced and examined.

Although Kantha himself was an able lawyer, he chose, so far as the work of the Commission was concerned, to function only as Secretary of the TRRO, confining himself to organisational work, providing background material and assistance required by lawyers. He was present almost every day of the Commission's sittings spread over two years and turned up even on days Mr. Sansoni himself was absent.

For some reason which has not been clear there was a noticeable

change in the atmosphere during the closing stages of the sittings in Kandy. Some of the lawyers for the TRRO suggested withdrawing from any further participation in the Commission's sittings. It was, however, decided to continue with the work the TRRO had undertaken in order that all available material be placed on record. So long as even one lawyer was there to appear, Kantha would be by his side. When the sittings commenced in Jaffna on 8 February 1978 there were nearly two dozen lawyers who appeared for the TRRO. On the last day of the sittings at Kandy on 10 December 1979 (which happens to be Human Rights Day) there was only one lawyer appearing for TRRO. But Kantha was there as usual.

Kantha's presence and his competent but friendly approach in all matters connected with the Commissioner's work was recognised by everyone concerned with the sittings. It was no surprise that one soon came to hear the remark that it was the "Kanthasamy Commission of Inquiry".

What motivated Kantha's complete commitment to the work before the Sansoni Commission was perhaps the realisation which was reflected in one sentence in the TRRO representations which he addressed to the Commission in January 1978 under the formal signature of the TRRO President K. C. Nythianantha:

"To be a Tamil was one of the greatest misfortunes in August-September 1977".

Then stating that the Tamils never wanted separation, and that the candidates who raised this cry in Tamil areas before the 1970 elections lost even their deposits to other Tamil candidates opposed to separation, the TRRO statement went on, with prophetic foresight, to warn that if Sinhalese-Tamil relations were permitted to deteriorate the —



"enduring hostility would force them to spend a sizeable part of their G.N.P. in maintaining standing armies, if not waging continual war, with possible third party interference and thus pave the way for continual misery for both races."

It was characteristic of Kantha's attitude that throughout all this time of conflict he was mindful of the human qualities of the Sinhala people providing a ray of hope. The concluding paragraph of the TRRO representations reflected this:

"One more point. During all these sickening days there was one ray of hope in this country. Hundreds of Sinhalese people men, women, and children risked their lives and limbs to save the lives, properties of their Tamil neighbours and friends, often with success. This also should be put on record with gratitude."

The Sansoni Commission Report was finally issued as Sessional Paper No. VII of 1980. Surprisingly the report was neither tabled nor debated in Parliament.

Had those in authority taken note of what transpired before the Sansoni Commission of Inquiry and reflected on the material placed before it

(particularly of Tamil complaints) the further tragedies of 1981 and 1983 and the agony the North and East and even the rest of the country has been going through since then might have been avoided.

Kantha left Sri Lanka just before the riots of July 1983 and returned shortly after the "Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka". The work that Kantha had dedicated himself to for more than a decade took him now to the North and East and he has not been heard of since 19th June 1983. Two hundred years ago when, in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789 the French National Assembly was debating the fate of Louis XVI Robespierre with his revolutionary logic intervened to remark:

"We don't want to judge the king;  
We want to kill him."

What is one to say of the manner in which K. Kanthasamy is said to have met his end? Liberation logic?

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Manivasagan Underwood is an Attorney-at-law active in human rights. He was one of the lawyers who appeared for the TRRO and certain other organisations before the Sansoni Commission.

## A TRIBUTE FROM CHRISTIAN AID

### Michael Hawkes

The struggle for justice unites women and men of goodwill throughout the world across barriers of race and creed. K. Kanthasamy dedicated his life to this cause through his love for his country and his distress at the suffering of the people of Sri Lanka over so many years. Christian Aid, as the development agency of the British Council of Churches, has worked in partnership with groups in Sri Lanka for many years — supporting their efforts to tackle the causes of poverty and oppression and to empower the poor to take control of their own lives.

We recognise the deep respect in which Mr. K. Kanthasamy is held by so many people in Sri Lanka. His integrity, his respect for the truth, and his total commitment to upholding the rights of all people are an inspiration to us all. His involvement in rehabilitation programmes for those whose lives had been destroyed by inter-communal conflict showed how much he identified with

ordinary men and women in their daily lives. But his deep respect for both the law and for the inviolability of people's basic human rights took him into the dangerous area of challenging injustice and working with the powerless. It now seems that Kanthasamy has paid for that commitment to inter-racial justice with his life. To all of us—whether in Sri Lanka or overseas — Kanthasamy was an inspiration, and his spirit continues to strengthen us as we work for a society where the rights of all women and men are respected. Christian Aid commits itself to continuing to be a part of that world-wide movement for justice for the poor and oppressed. Kanthasamy's witness strengthens us in that resolve

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Michael Hawkes is Asia / Pacific Group Head of Christian Aid, UK



## THE GENTLE ADVOCATE

J. Diandas

I knew Mr. K. Kanthasamy primarily in an inter-professional relationship, he as a lawyer, I as an accountant. I came to know him first by meeting him in the chambers of Advocate Nadarasa, and later more intensively when a common client entered into protracted litigation. Later still when any client of mine required, in connection with his business affairs, legal advice, I usually took him to Mr. Kanthasamy, and in a few instances when a client of his required advice within my field of knowledge he summoned me.

Consultations at his rather bleak chambers in Rosmead Place were pleasant, unhurried even leisurely events, the first five minutes usually covering topical matters unconnected with the case at hand. But when business proper started there was soft spoken concentration on the issues. He succeeded more than most advocates I know in soothing a client's over-enthusiasm to litigate, perhaps because he was more concerned than others not to go to court when other remedies, or even acceptance or acquiescence seemed more useful to the client's long run interest, or perhaps because of his gentle persuasive style.

However, once he was satisfied that litigation was necessary, he pursued a systematic course of first setting down the broad guidelines of what was to be argued and what evi-

dence would be required, and then a painstaking attention to all relevant details.

In court, too, his style seemed to me to be that of insistent gentle persuasion, whether in addressing the judge or in cross-examining the opposing witness rather than the client-impressing flamboyance in other styles.

Personal friendship grew out of these inter-professional contacts. In fact because as counsel he offered advice only upon a systematic perception of underlying circumstances as well as visible effects and facts, he was a reliable source of opinion on wider issues in the land.

Because of this lengthy leisurely professional and personal association I was dismayed when he went abroad and suffered ill health there, but the lingering uncertain percolation of the news of his death has been totally numbing.

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J. Diandas is Chairman of the Chartered Institute of Transport Sri Lanka Section, an independent transport consultant and researcher, and also a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Sri Lanka.

## KANDIAH KANTHASAMY

Yvonne Terlingen

Kanthasamy was one of the strongest advocates of human rights in Sri Lanka. We learned first of his work for the Sansoni Commission which inquired into the ethnic violence of 1977 and later got to know him personally after he had set up in 1983, the Tamil Information Centre in London. The high standards he set himself were typical of all the work he did: it was marked by a painstaking care to document the facts, get the details right and never say or write anything that he could not substantiate. It was near impossible to prove him wrong. If there was doubt about what exactly happened in any incident he was the first to express caution about reporting it.

He refused to be influenced by political considerations: he reported on abuses of power regardless of whether the victims belonged to one group or another, Tamil or Sinhalese. His concern was with the victims and not with their political affiliation. He was deeply committed and equally anxious about what happened to the Tamils and to the Sinhalese, although his work concentrated on documenting human rights violations in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. After he returned to his country and learned at first hand, what was happening in the south, his reports incorporated many incidents of which the Sinhalese were victims.

He worked passionately, without taking rest, even on Sundays, holidays

or evenings, as if sensing that time too short to do what he had to. He disregarded doctors' advice to slow down after undergoing major heart bypass surgery in 1984. He would not complain even in hospital, obviously in pain having just suffered a heart attack, he would attempt a smile through an oxygen mask and indicate that the last man anyone should worry about was him. He refused to accept anything for himself allow time for relaxation or enjoy the things he loved, such as classical Tamil music.

He was a man of great courage. He returned to Sri Lanka having decided that his help was most needed there, knowing all too well how great the risk of death was if he did so. That was perhaps his one failure: his inability to change his mind once he had decided what he had to do. It is rare to meet a man with such selfless dedication, such integrity and independent spirit, so compassionate and of such gentle but unshakable character.

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Yvonne Terlingen works in the Asia Research Department of the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London.



## CAN THE MURDER OF ONE GOOD MAN STOP THE DETERIORATING CHAOS ?

Brian Senewiratne

I first met this remarkable man in June 1986 when I decided to spend a few days in London lobbying for the Tamil cause. I wrote to Kanthasamy saying that I felt that as a Sinhalese, the impact of my lobbying would be considerable and could he arrange whatever interviews he could in the three days I could spend in London.

I arrived in London and met a quiet retiring man wearing a worn out pair of tennis shoes sitting behind a cluttered desk in his High Street Clapham office.

Hardly had I sat down before he handed me a list of some thirty names. They included members of the House of Lords, British MPs, senior members of the Foreign Office, foreign diplomats, members of the British Press, the BBC, church groups, human rights workers and publishers. I asked him what this list was all about. He told me with disarming frankness. "These are the people you have to meet". I reminded him that I had come to London for three days, not three weeks. His response was, "Well, you are here for three days aren't you? You will simply have to get up early and go to bed late. You can then go back to Australia and have a rest. You came here to work for the Tamil cause, didn't you?" A protest was futile. He had already made the necessary appointments.

Over the next three days we trekked across London seeing some of the most inaccessible men in that

city. That we were able to see them at all was ample evidence of the regard with which Kanthasamy was held by people in such different walks of life. It was obvious to me that here was a man obsessed with one idea—that my visit to London should be worthwhile. When I expressed surprise at the man's energy, I was told by a colleague that the hours he worked with me were almost a daily routine, I was astounded to hear that he did all this work without a salary and with serious coronary disease. That is the calibre of the man that both you and I have lost and why I cannot conceal my anger that Kantha was murdered by a bunch of hoodlums whose combined value makes them unworthy to untie the shoe laces of this great man.

### The return to Sri Lanka

After the 1987 Accord, Kanthasamy decided to return to Sri Lanka to supervise the rehabilitation programme more closely. He kept me posted of the scores of projects that he had in mind to help the unfortunate people. I also received an alarming document which indicated that some members of EROS had visited his office in Jaffna and threatened him: "They also reminded me that Kathiramalai was killed because he acted against the policy of EROS, and that could be the fate of others as well."

I was abroad when Kanthasamy was abducted and did not hear of it for some time. As soon as I heard about it, I telephoned a senior member of EROS in London and asked

him about the abduction. He launched into a tirade against Kanthasamy. The basic problem, he said was that "we are Marxists and he is not." When asked whether that was sufficient reason for abduction, he replied that their group did not abduct Kanthasamy but told me that I should not expect to see him alive again. With mounting international condemnation of the abduction, EROS did a complete somersault and issued a statement praising Kanthasamy and all the work he had done!

Damage done by Kanthasamy's murder

### 1. The Rehabilitation programme

Those who have lost out by Kanthasamy's death, are, as always, the Tamil people — those innocent victims of this senseless war. International funds are most certainly going to dry up. Unless someone of Kanthasamy's ability to deliver the good is found, donor agencies will simply not come to the party. With the fate that has befallen Kanthasamy the chance of persuading someone of his calibre to take on this job would be pretty remote. As Kanthasamy pointed out before he died if EROS or any other militant group think that donor agencies will pour money into a rehabilitation organisation linked with one of the militant groups, they are living in a dream world. With Kanthasamy's death the rehabilitation programme has been set back ten years, perhaps more.

### 2. The Tamil cause

The damage done to the Tamil cause itself has been even more serious than the damage done to the rehabilitation programme. Let me refer to two strong supporters of the Tamil cause, both of them non-Sri Lankans — the late Paul Sleghart, Chairman of the British Legal group "Justice" and David Selbourne, a po-

litical scientist and a long time supporter of the Tamil cause.

(Note: Dr. Senewiratne here quotes from Paul Sleghart and David Selbourne; what they had to say has been reproduced more fully elsewhere in this publication).

Where I am concerned, it will be dishonest for me to say that Kanthasamy's murder has not affected me. It has considerably dampened the enthusiasm with which I voluntarily threw myself into this struggle. I have begun to question what type of campaign I am supporting. Is it to establish a Pol Pot type regime in Sri Lanka? If it is, then I would be doing more harm than good for the Tamil people and would prefer to dissociate myself from the struggle. I am still hanging on for only one reason. It is because I still feel, as I have felt for the past 40 years, that the Tamil minority have suffered serious discrimination at the hands of the Sinhalese majority. The areas that they live in have suffered serious neglect at the hands of Sinhalese politicians and to do nothing about it would be to condone a major violation of the civil and political rights of a minority.

### 3. The Tamil militant movement

The cold-blooded murders by Tamil militants of Anandarajah, Dharmalingam, Alalasunderam, Fr. Chandra Fernando, and now Kanthasamy, to mention just a few, have done tremendous damage to the Tamil militant movement itself. There can be no question that the Tamil militant movement has been the backbone of Tamil resistance against Sinhalese aggression and is a major factor in pressuring the Sinhalese government to grant some form of realistic devolution of power to Tamil areas.

### 4. The expatriate Tamil community

The expatriate Tamil communities in the UK, US, Canada and Australia



have played a major role in bringing to the attention of the world the sufferings of the Tamil people and the serious violations of their human rights. With their failure to condemn the atrocities that are being committed almost on a daily basis by their own people in the North and East they have put the credibility of the entire Tamil expatriate groups on the line.

I can understand the silence of the Tamils in what we hope will be Eelam. Under the anarchy in which they find themselves, it has been rightly observed that the Tamil in the North and East of Sri Lanka does not open his mouth except to eat. But what restrains his expatriate brother? Are expatriate Tamils prepared, indeed enthusiastic, to condemn the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government and its undisciplined security forces, by the Indian government and its equally undisciplined "Peace-Keeping Force" but unprepared to condemn their own people? Rightly prepared to condemn Sinhalese hoodlums who have ravaged the Tamil areas but are not prepared to condemn Tamil hoodlums who have done just that, ironically in the same area?

I would ask you to take a leaf out of the South African book. I refer to Murphy Morobe, one of the black South African leaders of the United Democratic Front who recently said, "Mrs. Mandela has abused the trust and the confidence which she has enjoyed over the years. We are not prepared to remain silent when those who are violating human rights claim to be doing so in the name of the struggle against apartheid." That, I

might say, is the difference between a campaign that is heading for success and one that is not.

Eelam

If Eelam is going to be a place run by barbarians no different from the gangsters in Colombo. what good is it? If in Eelam, differing view points are settled not by reasoned discussion, but by an AK 47 rifle, what good is it? If Eelam is going to be worth living in, then it must be born out of the Tamil soul and must represent the best of Tamil culture and traditions. Intolerance and murder of innocent civilians (both Tamils and Sinhalese), now so common in the Tamil areas, is not part of Tamil culture or tradition. The rhetoric is that "we are fighting for a Tamil homeland" We are fighting for much more. We are fighting to establish a Tamil homeland which reflects Tamil culture and traditions—a humane and a just Eelam.

What you can do.

#### 1. Regarding Kanthasamy

It is a little too late to do anything for Kanthasamy. All you can do now is to write to the leaders of EROS and tell them what you think. They have offices in London, in Jaffna and now, even in the Sri Lankan parliament.

2. Regarding the other crimes that have been and are even now being committed in the name of Eelam, write to the other groups. I urge you not to write general letters asking them to be "good boys". Write speci-

fic letters, as Amnesty International has done for years, with such striking success.

You must raise such questions with the people who are perpetrating these crimes if you are genuinely concerned about the welfare of your people in Sri Lanka. It is the least we can do in the memory of the man we honour today. If by our protests we even marginally decrease the senseless killings that are occurring in Sri Lanka today Kanthasamy would not have died in vain.

An edited version of part of an address at a meeting in Sydney, Australia held on 19 February, 1989 in honour of K. Kanthasamy. Dr. Brian Senewiratne, formerly Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Sri Lanka, is now Consultant Physician at Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane, Australia. He has written and campaigned extensively on human rights in Sri Lanka, with particular emphasis on a just political solution to the ethnic problem.

## COMMEMORATING K. KANTHASAMY

Peter Schalk and Gerd Falk - Schalk

Most of us Western scholars, journalists and human rights activists who during the 1980s visited the Tamil Information Centres in London, Madras or Madurai might have met K. Kanthasamy or just "Kantha" who patiently informed us about the latest development at the front in Lanka. "Kantha" was also an honoured guest in our house in Uppsala, Sweden where he had come in November, 1987, in order to engage NGOs for aid giving to the Tamil regions in Lanka. We had occasions to come closer each other during long walks on the plain and surrounding forest of Uppsala. He had a very fine sense of humour through which he indicated his alienation to long ideological debates and quarrels among the Tamil groups. Those who tried to classify him poli-

tically were usually mistaken. To us he showed a very important side of the struggle of the Tamils for freedom, a struggle which by him was fought beyond ideological motives and feelings of revenge. I never heard him generalise about "the Sinhalese", Kantha had visions and plans for the future of unity among the Tamil people which will be discussed long after his disappearance.

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Peter Schalk is a Professor at Uppsala University in Sweden; Gerd Falk-Schalk is a human rights activist.

# HOW COULD SUCH A MAN BE A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE ?

V. R. Krishna Iyer

When Kanthasamy was kidnapped I was informed and alerted to intervene with Lankan militants, located in Madras, to trace him and rescue that great yet gentle battler for human rights. I failed to reach him. Is he in that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns?

—  
He was a lawyer for whom the liberties of a people were a cause to be fought. The narrow interests of the profession did not fetter him. The adventurist aspects of terrorism did not tempt his humanist soul. How could such a man be victim of violence? If spiritual forces of goodness and ethics have relevance to material dialectics, the slaying of dedicated leaders and cadres retards the movement, delays and defeats the goal and bloodies the very values which

bind the brigades of common people who sacrifice themselves for the just Tamil cause.

Kanthasamy was both a means and an end. He stood as a symbol of human rights and champion of Tamil ethnic justice. It is blasphemy to say that he is dead. He is deathless and inspires the campaign. Death may do away with the body; but Yama is powerless against the power of the spirit. Kanthasamy lives on, so long as human rights activists fight on.

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**V. R. Krishna Iyer is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court of India and is actively engaged in human rights work.**



JUNE 19, 1988

## *Sister Bernadette*

It is with deep sorrow that I remember the day of 19th June, 1988.

It was the day on which the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and their struggle for humanization and freedom from all kinds of oppression, lost a person, a fully humanized person, called Kanthasamy.

It would be very wrong on my part to say that we LOST him. In fact, he was SACRIFICED, like a silent lamb. His blood was sprinkled on the soil he was born to purify. So pure and sincere was he in thought, word and action his very sincerity and truthfulness had become a threat to others who saw themselves as saviours

Throughout history men and women have sacrificed their lives for the sake of truth and their fellow men; history was continued and repeated in the person of Kantha on 19th June 1988.

In today's world with so much injustice and so little peace, many people long for a more just and peaceful society. Kantha was one such person. Many people want to bring about a more just and peaceful world but are not sure how to go about it. Kantha was convinced that he knew a way to achieve it. What can one person do in the face of powerful forces causing war and injustice? Such a question never quenched the thirst of Kanthasamy, who continued to work for justice and human rights in spite of many hardships and obstacles.

Liberation from all kinds of oppression and the humanization of our

war-suffering people was the goal of his life. Truth and simplicity were his way of life; firmness in his convictions and hard work were his equipment.

He spent much of his life in the service of suffering, poor, marginalised people. He counted himself with the uncounted and gave up his life for their cause.

He had nothing. He owned nothing. And, in our materialistic society, he was nothing. Yet, he was great and deep and powerful. Powerful as true silence.

Kantha was a man of silence. His life was a silent message; his death is still a silence. But from the deep and unconquerable silence of this man's life will emerge a powerful force that will lead our people towards truth and real freedom. It is in deep silence that many mysteries were born and made throughout history.

Kantha will always live in the hearts of his people. His spirit of service and his willingness to sacrifice himself will be reincarnated in the lives of the people he loved. Spirits like his cannot be destroyed by evil, noisy and empty trumpets.

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Sister Bernadette is a Catholic nun who has been engaged for many years in refugee relief and rehabilitation work and other social service in Northern Sri Lanka.

## KANTHASAMY AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

*Rev. Celestine Fernando*

K. Kanthasamy joined CRM a few years after its inception in 1971 and soon proved one of its most solid members. He gave invaluable service on CRM's Administration and Finance Committee. He was a person of great integrity and openness, with a capacity for friendship, and with the quiet courage that accompanied his complete dedication to the cause of human rights eschewing violence in all he did.

Kanthasamy also placed his legal skills at the disposal of the Movement. He was one of the defence team in the trial before the Supreme Court in 1980 of S. Nadesan, QC. for breach of parliamentary privilege in respect of a report written for CRM. Kanthasamy's service to us as a lawyer, however, was certainly not limited to participation in exciting causes *celebres*. During his sojourn abroad he continued to perform legal work for CRM whenever called upon, with his usual thoroughness, and always with great willingness, though the demands made of him were often difficult, tedious and time-consuming.

Kanthasamy's contributions to CRM's discussions were always calm, dispassionate and constructive. Uncompromising in his own integrity and devotion to principle, he firmly upheld the right of others to hold and to express opposing views. His self-effacing and unassuming manner coupled with his exceptional organi-

sational skills, and his unflinching good humour, made him an asset to any organisation.

Kanthasamy was also an enthusiastic member of the Nadesan Centre for Human Rights through Law, which CRM helped to set up. He assisted in formulating the basic concept of the project, helped in fund-raising, and gave us realistic advice from his own experience about computerisation.

After his return to Sri Lanka in January 1988 Kanthasamy spent nearly all his time on relief and rehabilitation work in the North and East. His visits to Colombo were brief, and crowded. He nevertheless offered to serve again on CRM's Administration and Finance Committee. He had embarked on the task of collecting and evaluating information about the various computers available in Sri Lanka with the Nadesan Centre's needs in mind when his abduction took place.

In informal discussions with CRM members during the first six months of 1988 Kanthasamy voiced his grave concern at developments in Southern Sri Lanka. He stressed that the government, in fulfilling its responsibility to maintain law and order, should not let its forces commit human rights violations in the South and thus repeat the mistakes it had made in the North in contravention

of our constitution and of our international obligations.

When I met him in London he was obviously unhappy because at that time he couldn't be back in Sri Lanka to help in the many projects for the rehabilitation of the people in the North and East whom he served so long. He and another friend also devoted to human rights expressed their deep concern to be back. And when he did return, my last chat I had with him was in my home (only a few days before he left on his last journey to the North). I tried to persuade him that he should be in the South at that time when again he revealed how much he wanted a new spirit for unity and peace to prevail in both North and South, based on the fulfilment of our joint responsibilities to safeguard human rights and seek justice for all.

In May 1988 CRM suffered a cruel blow in the death of a valued founder

member, the brilliant lawyer Nimal Senanayake. We had scarce begun to mourn this tragedy when the abduction of Kanthasamy followed. This second disaster has an extra dimension because of the manner of his loss. Elsewhere in this commemoration volume, another of our members has movingly described the effect of a "disappearance". CRM members who knew Kanthasamy now suffer at first hand the experience of the family and friends of a person who is suddenly plucked from our midst, whose whereabouts cannot be traced and whose fate still remains unknown.

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**Rev. Celestine Fernando is Chairman of the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka.**



## KANTHASAMY, THE KARMA YOGI

It was more than twenty five years ago, in the early 1960s, that I first met with Kanthasamy. At that time, he was a young lawyer working in Advocate N. Nadarasa's chambers at Kollupitiya. But he was already displaying some of the qualities which would stand him in good stead in the years to come. He addressed himself, in a systematic and disciplined manner, to whatever task that was assigned to him. He was dependable. He was a doer—not a talker. His honesty and integrity were never in dispute. And there was an attractive simplicity about him as he travelled around in a motor scooter from chambers to Hultsdorf and back. But then, Kantha was a simple and honest man.

Many years later, I remember meeting him at Saraswathy Hall in Bambalapitiya. It was a couple of months after the burning of the Jaffna Public Library in June 1981. That was an incident which had left its mark on the consciousness of many thousands of Tamils, including myself. Kantha was at Saraswathy Hall, involved in the campaign to collect books to establish a new library, writing down carefully the titles of all the books that were handed over and the names of the donors. It was a time consuming task and not particularly glamorous — but, typically, Kantha approached his duties with cheerfulness and with dedication. Kantha had appeared as Counsel before the Sansoni Commission which

inquired into the attacks against the Tamil people in 1977, and this was the period in his life that he was working almost full time in the rehabilitation of Tamils who had been displaced by such attacks, and who had become refugees in their own land. And, it was his involvement in such refugee rehabilitation work that eventually led him to become a refugee himself and seek political asylum in the United Kingdom.

I met with him in London in late 1983 and he took me with some pride to the newly established office of the Tamil Information Centre which he had set up with the help of a few friends. He was full of the work he was doing, despite a recent heart attack and despite being told that he would need to undergo a by pass operation. There was a certain dignity about all that he did—he would tell me “You know, when I go to funding agencies for donations, I tell them that we are not beggars, but I know that in a way I am begging—but I beg not for myself but so that we can do something for our people.” The next few years in London were years of sustained activity for Kantha. There were occasions when I met with him, early in the morning, at his home in North London, before he left for the TIC office which was situated in South London. He would be dictating letters to a typist who had come — and, he would leave home, after the first morning mail was delivered. It was his way of maximising the efficient use of his time. And for more

than four years, until the signing of the Indo Sri Lanka Accord in July 1987 the Tamil Information Centre and the Central British Refugee Rehabilitation Fund which Kantha founded served as important focal points in the Tamil national liberation struggle.

I remember talking with him for more than six hours in early August 1987, trying to persuade him to change his decision to close the Tamil Information Centre and go back to Sri Lanka. As a refugee who had been granted asylum in the United Kingdom, Kantha could have stayed in London for as long as he wished but his basic response was that there was a need for him to go back and work amongst his people in the North and East of Sri Lanka—he felt that refugee rehabilitation work was the urgent need of the hour and that his own contribution to the struggle lay in this field.

A couple of days before he finally left the United Kingdom, Kantha travelled down to Cambridge to spend a day with my wife and I. We talked for several hours. It was a time for reminiscences. It was also a time to look at what the future held for us as a people. Kantha was not unaware of the difficulties that he would face from some political groups who may see his work amongst the Tamil people as a threat to their own influence and power. But Kantha was not only a

simple and honest man—he was also a courageous one. And as we embraced each other at my door step, and said good bye, both Kantha and I were not unaware that we may not see each other again.

As a Tamil, I must confess to a feeling of shame not unmixed with anger, that a so called Tamil 'liberation' group should have been responsible for Kantha's abduction and murder. We, as a people, cannot liberate ourselves from anything by killing those with whom we disagree. Kantha was an honourable man. He was a good man. And to him, work was worship—he was the karma yogi par excellence. And when we honour his memory and his work, we not only strengthen that which is good and honourable amongst the Tamil people we—also renew our own commitment to the Tamil national liberation struggle to which Kantha gave his life.

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**Nadesan Satyendra, a leading lawyer in the fields of company and labour relations law, now lives in Cambridge.**

## KANTHASAMY - A DEVOTED HUMANITARIAN

N. S. A. Sivertsen

I first met Kantha in November 1987. On a frosty winter day he came to Oslo to have talks with Norwegian NGOs, politicians and others on human rights in Sri Lanka, the prospect for peace after the Peace Agreement and the scope of the future rehabilitation work. His deep insight into the problems of Sri Lanka, his balanced and informative exposition of the economical, social, cultural and religious structures behind the seemingly "ethnic" conflict impressed us all.

Later I had the privilege to work with Kantha in his own, beloved country. The Norwegian Refugee Council was about to start an extensive rehabilitation project for repatriated refugees in Mannar and Kantha most willingly assisted me on my two first assessment tours to the area. It became more and more clear to me how privileged I was working together with him, both professionally and socially. We had a great time together. I miss him a lot.

Kantha lived and worked for the Tamil cause, for restoring peace and

understanding between the various groups in Sri Lanka. He worked hard, sometimes refusing the limits of the human body.

One night in Mannar, I woke up at 4 o'clock in the morning. The moon was full, a warm wind swept through the room. I went out to smoke a cigarette before going back to bed. The lights were on in Kantha's room. I approached silently. Through the window I could see him at the table, writing. Later I understood that he always got up that early to work.

Kantha was—is—and will forever be a source of inspiration.

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Nils A Sivertsen is Project Co-ordinator for Asia of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oslo.

# K. KANTHASAMY

## AN APPRECIATION

### Prins Rajasooriya

I have known K. Kanthasamy as a law student, a colleague at the Bar and a sincere and earnest fighter for human rights.

As a practicing lawyer he had acquired a unique knowledge of Company Law and excelled in branches of the Civil Law. If he was interested in a career the world was at his feet.

Looking around him, it is not surprising, with his sense of earnestness and human values that he spent much of his time in the field of human rights — advocating, spotlighting breaches and striving for the establishment of new rights and the extension of existing human rights. In the process, law in fact took a second place.

He was a quiet and unassuming man, soft spoken, patient with everybody, particularly those who disagreed with him.

He was also fearless and in his quiet way unyielding in matters of

principle. It was this steadfastness of purpose which led those who could not tolerate his activities to move against him.

Kantha as he was affectionately called by his friends inspired all those around him. He may be dead and no longer with us but the values he stood for and the causes he espoused will not vanish or disappear. They will emerge triumphant and not only vindicate Kantha but also keep his memory alive among all those who cherish moral values and human rights.

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**Prins Rajasooriya is a lawyer, trade unionist, and human rights activist. He is a former Secretary of the Joint Council of Trade Unions, and a former Secretary of the Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality.**



## KILLING CONTAMINATES THOSE WHO KILL

Martin Ennals

Kanthatasamy was a friend. I knew him first through Amnesty International as an enthusiastic worker for human rights throughout the world. He was committed, disciplined and imaginative in his efforts to work for prisoners of conscience and against torture and executions in other countries. But he never forgot that he was first and foremost a Sri Lankan Tamil with an ever deepening agony about what was happening in Sri Lanka itself.

His disappearance and presumed killing is a tragic illustration of the atrocities which are carried out in the name of all kinds of causes, whether nationalism, socialism, religion, conflict or peace.

To London Kantha came with an idea which he systematically put into practice: the creation of an Information Centre on Sri Lanka, specializing in all aspects of the struggle for Tamil rights. His quiet manner, his persuasive charm and his genuine concern for all of his people including his own colleagues and friends enabled him to overcome those obstacles which anyone encounters when working on a new project requiring space, expertise, teamwork, funds and hard work.

His health troubled him throughout his stay in London but he never allowed even his illness to deter him from his objective and his vision.

When he decided that the time had come for him to return home we discussed the risk and the wisdom of that decision. We sought to temper his enthusiasm with caution but his

courage was overwhelming and overrode our doubts. We recognised his strength of purpose, his integrity, and his motivation. He was modest, unassuming and kind. He would never have wished to be a hero or a martyr. But he is both and will remain so in our memory.

Kanthatasamy would not want us to mourn. He would urge us to re-dedicate ourselves to the objectives to which he devoted his life. Peace in Sri Lanka for all Sri Lankans. Peace and rights for all Tamils wherever they choose to live and work. The right for all children to learn and read, write and work in their mother tongue, respected in their environment and equal in their standing. We can all support him in his absence as in his presence. Those who killed him must not be allowed to kill what Kanthatasamy represented and worked for.

Sri Lanka is still living through civil strife. People are being killed without mercy for reasons which could never be justified but which are not even explained. Killing contaminates those who kill. The young people of Sri Lanka are growing up in an atmosphere of destruction from which recovery can only come through popular outrage and public leadership.

There is no victory in war — only defeat. Kanthatasamy was a man of peace. He waged peace mightily and died in the process. His memory must be our inspiration.

**Martin Ennals is Secretary General of International Alert. He is a former Secretary General of Amnesty International.**

## A TRIBUTE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIETY AND RELIGION

**Ainsley Samarajiwa**

It was my privilege to have known Mr. Kanthasamy from the time the ethnic strife erupted in 1977. We, in the Centre for Society and Religion had common interests in seeking a peaceful political solution. I well remember the tremendous task that Mr. Kanthasamy had to handle when refugees from the hill country started streaming into Colombo and had to be accommodated in the Kovil in Bambalapitiya. We at the Centre were associated in a small way in that task.

It was however not merely the humanitarian and social welfare work done by Mr. Kanthasamy that impressed us, but his total commitment to justice. The TRRO which he established with a few others will, we hope, remain a lasting monument to

this indefatigable worker for peace with justice. The support given by friends and agencies abroad was no doubt based on Mr. Kanthasamy's credentials as a non-partisan animator of those who worked for a new social order.

We mourn the 'disappearance' of this gentleman who did so much for the cause of our Tamil speaking people. He was indeed a martyr.

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**Ainsley Samarajiwa is an Attorney-at-Law, and a member of the Board of the Centre for Society and Religion.**



# HIS DEATH DIMINISHED ALL OF US

S. Sivanayagam

When the frightful news reached me on Monday evening the 20th of June 1988 in Madras that on the previous morning Mr. K. Kanthasamy had been taken from his Jaffna residence, apparently by armed men, and that his life itself had been snuffed out, neither the three friends who brought me the message nor I were prepared to accept the dreadful possibility that we will not be seeing Kantha anymore; not even his tortured body. We willed ourselves to believe that he was yet alive, but in mortal danger. But the message was enough to crush our spirits. It meant more than the loss of a dear friend.

As a human being I felt diminished because in this imperfect world, it was not easy to come across a better human being than Kantha. As a believer in human rights I was saddened at the disappearance of a man who was a crusader in the field. As a co-activist in the Tamil cause I felt weakened, and was sorry for the Tamil people. As one who took PRIDE in being involved in the struggle for Tamil rights, it hurt me, hurt my pride, hurt me terribly that a Tamil who had done more than any other to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow Tamils — a giant achiever — should come to this fate at the hands of some mindless small men themselves Tamils; whose minds could neither grasp the finer human values, nor a world beyond guns; not even the dire need to preserve the finest human resources within us in waging a common struggle in which all of us in different ways were direct participants, and joint victims of an exter-

nal oppression; whose minds, alas, could not reach up to anything sacred beyond the sordid business of appropriating money — MONEY! — and from a man who raised millions and millions from sympathetic, trusting sources in the West in order to set up and run a multiplicity of organisations and bodies to help the Tamil cause, but who himself led a life of self-denying, spartan simplicity.

At the time I came to know Kantha in Colombo in the late seventies, I had no reason to suggest that he was a fast-emerging, successful Company lawyer with a capacity to command a monthly income of Rs. 20,000/-. Neither his life style nor his manner suggested it. Everything about him pointed to a struggling, non-affluent attorney — the unpretentious chambers that he occupied, an old two-wheeler in the porch that was not always in running condition; and an equally humble Austin 30 car on four wheels, a hub cap of which one night fell off while passing Viharamahadevi Park. It was past 11 in the night and he had offered to drop me home at Wellawatte. Seated next to him in the car and hearing the big rattling noise outside, I said: "What's one of your hub caps". Kantha stopped the car, turned to me resentfully and said: "I didn't know my car has hub caps?"

It was around mid-1981 in the wake of the Government vandalism in Jaffna and the destruction of the Public Library when my close association with him began, which was to last the next seven years until he himself was crucified.

I was hardly seven months in my new job at the Colombo Plan Office when I had a message that Mr. Kanthasamy wanted to meet with me on a matter of urgency. A man of few words, he came to the point straight-away: The Tamil people cannot go on without an English-language newspaper to articulate their grievances. Even the burning of the Jaffna Library was suppressed in the Colombo papers. Our issue had to be internationalised, he said. Would I accept both the responsibility and the risk in editing such a paper? It was also necessary that such a paper should have its physical roots in Tamil soil, if we are to reflect authentically the heart-beats of the people whose cause it was meant to espouse. Having crossed a lifetime of fifty years in which quick decisions were my forte, and with a history of three resignations to my credit, this was one of the quickest decisions that I made. It also meant my moving back to Jaffna after a near 30-year work spell in Colombo. I was happy to go back to my roots. I was getting sick of Colombo anyway. My terms of employment at the Colombo Plan office required that I give three months' notice, which I handed over in end-September. The paper, a weekly, was scheduled for January, and the next three months had to be devoted for the spade-work. We met every Saturday evening at the residence of our fellow collaborator Mr. V. Kanapathipillai, and between the three of us, we sat down to the business of project reports and appeals for funds.

Kantha and I soon learnt to communicate with each other on a unique wavelength — open with a pleasantry that was to the point, use of words whether in Tamil or English restricted to the minimum and the whole conversation laced with a self-mocking humour that was his own speciality. As founder-editor of the paper I was given a free

hand, in naming the paper, setting out its objectives, rationing the editorial inputs and determining its day-to-day policy on any issue, the kind of freedom that very few editors are blessed with. He told me: "The finances are my problem. You don't have to worry about that. What you do with the paper is your problem, I won't worry about it". I said "Amen", and that was that. Never once did Kantha interfere in the editorial policy, while others did try. For a man who fathered the paper, and attended to its constant needs, and sorted out problems that regularly cropped up, it did not strike him that he could have exercised at least a moral if not a proprietary right to throw in a suggestion, offer and occasional advice, criticise something if he felt it necessary, but No. I cannot imagine any other man in his position showing such forbearance and detachment.

The SATURDAY REVIEW was launched on January 30, 1982, with the editorial office housed in an old Dutch-style building at Chapel Street, Jaffna, which our bustling Councillor Kanagarajanayagam soon made look respectable with a cosmetic colour wash. If the Tamil people owed a debt to Kantha's vision and dedicated hard work that a long-felt need of theirs had been fulfilled and that too in Eelam soil, I consider it my personal debt to him that it was he who gave me one and a half years of the most fruitful, satisfying and rewarding period of my life. Not that life was easy. The SATURDAY REVIEW was not just journalism for a cause. It was a challenge, an advantage. Sitting on the Editor's chair was like sitting on a hot stove all the time. But such was the enthusiasm that Kantha generated, that it did not seem to be so at that time. I used to awaken to that fact only when well-meaning friends and admirers of the paper kept worrying about me. The story of the SR, until it was banned



by the government in July 1983 is a story in itself which has to be told some other time.

July-August 1983 which inflicted such grievous wounds on the Tamil people and their entire psyche, we soon found, was only a beginning. The Jayewardene government was determined to crush Tamil life and all the living organisms that breathed life into Tamil resistance. Gandhiam was already put to fire and sword. President S. A. David was languishing in jail, and Secretary Dr. Rajasundaram bludgeoned within its precincts. The SATURDAY REVIEW and SUTHANTHIRAN offices were sealed. By end-September I had surfaced in Madras, with just enough resources to feed myself for a month or two, and not knowing what the future held for me. And then began, as if some unseen hand had planned it, my second phase of active association with Kantha, if earlier we had worked in tandem in Colombo-Jaffna, now it was London-Madras. Kantha had wasted no time in establishing a Tamil Information Centre in London, and another was being readied in Madras. He asked me to take charge of publications to propagate the Tamil cause at the Madras end. Similar centres were planned for Delhi and Madurai, and while the former failed to materialise, the Madurai Centre became an accomplished fact in due course.

But this achievement of Kantha's was not without an initial period of mental trial both for him and me. It dawned on us that working for the Tamil cause meant not only fighting an external force, but also fighting

"an enemy within". It amazed me how a community which could produce one Kanthasamy who had the capacity to found several organizations, could at the same time produce hundreds of others who felt no compunction in appropriately to themselves what another man had created. In October, Kantha suffered a massive heart attack. For over a month thereafter there was no telephonic contact between us. Sitting helplessly in Madras, already worried on the one hand by the nervous state of my wife and two daughters in Jaffna, I was preparing my mind to face the worst about Kantha. And finally, a long hand-written letter from him dated 21 November, 1983 reached me. He wrote:

"Dear Siva, Here I am perhaps at the beginning of my second innings. I am showered with all possible cautions, without any understanding of my attitude to life — life should terminate some time and we have no control over it.....

These words of his came back to me five years later, on the 20th June His letter continued:

".....on the 4th (Oct.) when I got the pain which I suspected had something to do with the heart I was reminded of Nadesan's advice. (the reference was to Queen's Counsel S. Nadēsan): Never go to Intensive Care Unit where you have a greater chance of dying; the best thing is to drink a glass of water and sleep. If your system can fight it, well and good; otherwise you die. I followed the advice; I drank half

a glass of water and perhaps made up the balance with a few half-hearted "Muruga" and went to sleep fully expecting not to get up. Contrary to my expectation I could not sleep due to persistent pain. At 4 in the morning I broke Nadesan's advice and called for the Emergency Doctor who put into motion the normal machinery which included Coronary Care Unit (equivalent of Intensive Care Unit). I survived all of them and was released on 15th October. I got into further unknown problems and was again admitted to hospital on the advice of a friendly GP (whose services I have acquired since the release from the hospital). I now understand that during the first four or five days the possibility of my joining the "Maker" was not ruled out. Perhaps the doctors took mercy on the "Maker" and made me survive. I am now released (17/11), quite well, being cured of some unknown disease, now suspected to be some virus. I think I have missed the count. I am at the beginning of the 3rd innings. Whatever the innings is, let us continue to play cheerfully so long as it lasts. I am not expected to work yet, which rule I am breaking when it is absolutely necessary or for much lesser reasons. I am expected to get back to normal (with perhaps restrictions) in another six weeks but I hope to do some work from home until then....."

And then followed four more pages, all relating to work! Reading what he says, one should not be surprised that within a few months

of this, he had to undergo bypass surgery; and came through again. He forgot to keep count, but that made it the beginning of his fourth innings. Something must have impelled him to end it all in his own native soil. Of one thing about Kantha I am sure: he would not have failed to make some light-hearted remark at his killers before they finished him.

The period between October 1983 and April 1984 was an unhappy phase for Kantha in UK, and to me as well in Madras. The Tamil Information Centre sited at Mahalingapuram that was Kantha's own creation was hijacked by men who said the Centre was public property; and public property it soon became, with the Centre itself folding up after Kantha refused to support it any further and some of them sharing the spoils. Meanwhile, we started afresh at Besant Nagar. Let alone the furniture and other office effects, even the books, files and documents that I had begun to build up were lost irretrievably. But it did not matter. By the time we entered the fourth year of operation at Besant Nagar, Madras in April 1987, having re-oriented our work-concept in the previous year and functioning under the name Tamil Information and Research Unit (TIRU), instead of Tamil Information Centre, we had achieved a high degree of credibility as the major storehouse of information in India on all matters related to the Sri Lankan issues, Academics, scholars and researcher students in India, journalists, film-makers both Indian and from the West, representatives of Human Rights organisations, even



some academics from the West and members of international bodies engaged in the peace process, regularly called on us either for reference material or background information, or for our own assessments on given issues, and sometimes even assistance in paving the way for dialogues. Happy as I was in serving as an instrument in carrying forward the objectives that Kantha had in mind, to think that the Madras operation was only one of Kantha's several concerns and pre-occupations boggles one's imagination as to the enormosity and diversity of the tasks that he had undertaken and the work-load he had imposed on himself. Some say that King Ravana's mythical concept of ten heads has a rational explanation: he was a man with several strings to his bow, pursuits, involvements, accomplishments that were TEN in number — warrior, musician, Sivabaktha, aviator, and so on. I can straightaway think of ten different pursuits and organizations in which Kantha had direct concern and involvement — Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation (Colombo, later Jaffna); Central British Fund for Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation (UK); Theepam Research Institute (Jaffna); New Era Publication Ltd., publishers of SATURDAY REVIEW (Jaffna); Home for Human Rights (Jaffna); Tamil Information Centre (UK); Tamil Information Centre, later Tamil Information and Research Unit (Madras); Tamil Information Centre, (Madurai); Movement for Integration of Refugees and Repatriates (Madurai); and a twin project for Communication Research and Development Research (Jaffna), conceived after Kantha decided to get back but which he never

lived to see attain fruition; and for all of which he found the required funds — a stupendous task in itself, in which he had the untiring support of another selfless worker and gracious human being Fr. James Pathinathar.

It was such a man who took the the first false step in his life, at least during the period I had known him well — a step that was also to prove fatal. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 30, 1987, might have given distant viewers the illusion that peace had returned, but even here there were exceptions, like Dr. Brian Seniwaratne in Australia, who refused to believe it. I was in a position to know in person (as to how, is another story that has to be told some other time), the clash of motives, thinking, and the hidden suspicions both on the Indian side as well as the LTTE leadership level even at that point of time. Anyway I had always believed in the Kipling statement: "Nothing is ever settled, until it is settled RIGHT". So that, when Kantha phoned me on August 3—three days after the Accord was signed—and again on the 4th and 5th, indicating a decision to close down the offices in London, Madras and Madurai, and his own desire to get back to undertake refugee resettlement and reconstruction work in the Tamil areas, I could while appreciating his motives, not understand the wisdom behind it. Looking back at my personal diary of August 3, I find the puzzled entry: "Why is Kantha rushing things?" His suggestion that I come back to Jaffna and revive the SATURDAY REVIEW, I vetoed right away. There was no question of talking him out of the decisions that he had made, for himself and in respect



of closure of TIC, because when I pressed him, he threw at me the final argument—there is no funding available after October. On 14th September, the Board of Directors of the TIC in London met and took the formal decision to close down, and hand over the premises to the landlord before the end of October. In Madras, I wound up office functioning in November-end, but retained half the premises and a skeleton staff, until year-end, with a vague hope that Kantha who had in the meanwhile promised to come to Madras first, could yet be persuaded to stay on in Madras until conditions back home improved. My diary entry for December 5 reads: "Kantha phones. He has got his ticket and visa for the 13th flight from London. I warn him there is no chance in the immediate future of his going back and working either in the North or the East. Shall talk about it in Madras he says. He has got the usual 3-month visa. London-Bombay on the 13th. Due in Madras by IC flight. Madras 7.20 p.m."

He duly arrived, and with his arrival, what was an emptied-out office flat with the minimum furniture required for his personal stay, turned overnight into a busy office again. Twenty six large packages, professionally packed for seaworthiness, containing books, documentation material and files, were enlisted as additional "furniture." Visitors began streaming in. Two days after his arrival he insisted that I sit with him to discuss the heavy programme of work in Trincomalee and Jaffna. There were two basic projects that he envisaged — a Development Research Project, and a Communication Research Project, involving the four organisations in Jaffna — TRRO,

NEP, Theepam and HHR. And I knew there was no stopping him. He told me about some shopping to be done, in the manner of any other Londoner talking of shopping in Madras, and I whole-heartedly supported the idea, thinking it would be a useful distraction. But alas, the "shopping" turned out to be the purchase of one Towel (not even two), a pair of open sandals, and having a haircut which he wanted to have in India because it was lots cheaper than in UK! Later in Madurai, he made some additional "shopping", so Miss Maheswary told me later — a cheap travelling bag! This was the Kanthasamy that some moron in Jaffna alleged (after his killing) who had been squandering funds! What malevolence we are breeding—in "Tamil Eelam"!

Kantha left for Madurai on 12th January 1988 en route to Rameswaram and that was the last I saw of him. He did phone from Madurai, and later wrote from Jaffna and Colombo. His last letter written four days before he was killed, reached me after his death. It was some poet — was it Donne—who said:

EVERY MAN'S DEATH DIMINISHES ME.

Kantha's death not only diminished all of us; his killing diminished the self-esteem of the entire Tamil society.

S. Sivanayagam is a veteran freelance journalist having worked in the Lake House and Times Group of papers. He is founder-editor of the Jaffna weekly "Saturday Review" and has been Editor-in-chief of the Tamil Information Centre and Tamil Information and Research Unit Madras from September 1983 to December 1987. He had been writing under the pen-names of "Arjuna" and "Kartika" and contributes regularly to one Indian and two English publications including the "Tamil Times", London.

## K. KANTHASAMY

### S. Thuraisingham

I wish to write a few words regarding Mr. Kanthasamy's work towards refugee rehabilitation and human rights violation and its impact in Australia.

Following the communal disturbance in 1977, it was Mr. Kanthasamy who wrote to a few Tamils in Australia requesting them to form a group and thereby help TRRO to rehabilitate Tamil refugees. This resulted in the formation of the first Tamil Association in Sydney, Australia. It was due to his persistent efforts that Tamils in other states in Australia formed their own associations. His efforts helped to take up our cause in international forums.

In July 1979 Mr. Jayewardene declared emergency and ordered his army to end terrorism within six months in Tamil areas. This resulted in the killing of a few young Tamils and their bodies being thrown in the streets of Jaffna. It was Mr. Kanthasamy who telephoned from Colombo to inform us of the beginning of state terrorism. We were then able to take this matter up with the Australian Government, International Amnesty, Human Rights groups etc.

Many countries were able to understand and offer moral support to us because they found that Tamils were not treated as equals. This was made possible by people like Kanthasamy who worked day and night to disseminate

information regarding violation of human rights.

Mr. Kanthasamy was a courageous man. When our correspondence was once intercepted and published in Mr. Cyril Mathew's Sinhalese paper, Mr. Kanthasamy was not deterred from carrying out his duties towards his community. His advice was that we were not doing anything illegal and therefore we should not worry about anything.

When almost all the people in the Tamil areas wanted to leave the country, Kanthasamy who was in England wanted to go into the Tamil areas after the Indo-Sri Lanka accord against the advice of his friends. This again indicated his courage and concern for the welfare of the people even at the risk of his own life.

I met him in London in June 1987 and I never thought it would be the last time I will see him. At that time Mr. Kanthasamy was working at the Tamil Information Centre. He dedicated his entire life, despite the chronic heart ailment he had, to the cause of disseminating information which was so vital to counteract Sri Lankan government's false propaganda. While we were discussing the violation of human rights by various Tamil militant groups, he declared that he and his group will never keep silent whenever there was violation of human rights, from whichever quarter.



There is no need for me to say anything more about his rehabilitation work. In fact Force Ten Action (a joint programme of the Australian Council of Churches and the Australian Catholic Relief) informed the Australian public that all the refugee rehabilitation work had been suspended temporarily in the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka after the disappearance of Mr. Kanthasamy. This alone is sufficient to indicate that he was held in high esteem by international aid agencies. The loss of Mr. Kanthasamy is a loss not only for thousands of helpless Tamil Refugees but to many human rights activists. He is irreplaceable International aid agencies, human rights acti-

vists. Tamils around the world were shocked to find that a Tamil group was responsible for his disappearance. What this Tamil group has done to him was only to harm the liberation struggle of the Tamil people:

I take this opportunity to pay my tribute to a great soul who served the Tamil community regardless of his own interest.

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S. Thuraiingham is Secretary, Human Rights Council for Tamils in Sri Lanka, Riverwood, New South Wales, Australia.

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## THE FUTILITY OF KILLING AS AN EXTENSION OF POLITICS

### Lord Avebury

I knew Kantha through his work at the TIC here in London. Whenever I used to call in to see him, he would always find the time to talk, and would give me his own assessments of the latest developments. He worked very long hours, but was invariably ready to give wise advice and shrewd interpretations of complex events.

Kanthasamy believed that even after the bloodshed and violence of 1983, political answers were still possible. He was a man of peace, dedicated to the task of achieving a settlement of the conflict which had engulfed his people. When the accords were signed, he felt strongly that it was his duty to return and worked for reconstruction, although he was fully aware of the risks.

In the end, he confronted his own fate as he had done that of

so many others: calmly, dispassionately, and wanting people to know what had happened. He would not have wanted his death to be revenged, but he would have asked that in it we see the futility of killing as an extension of politics. He was a brave and good man who inspired the love and admiration of his friends.

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Lord Avebury, a computer engineer, and member of the Liberal Party in Britain, is Chairman of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group. He first visited Sri Lanka in 1971, to report on the aftermath of the JVP insurrection. He has performed similar assignments in many parts of the world, and is also active in the defence of civil liberties within Britain. He observed the Parliamentary General Election in Sri Lanka in February 1989.



## IN T. R. R. O. KANTHA LIVES IN ETERNITY

Karthigesu Sivathamby

Kanthatamy, to me, was the respected name of a sincere activist, a friend of some of my acquaintances, until July 1986, when under very unpremeditated circumstances I had to accept the chairmanship of TRRO.

From then on, until the day he disappeared, I worked with him.

Working with Kantha, was getting to know a selfless, self-effacing man, one with a missionary zeal in the cause of the eradication of the sufferings of the hapless, poor, not merely the Tamils of North and East Sri Lanka, but any human being whose rights were at stake and who was fighting for them.

TRRO is Kantha's brainchild. He along with such great men like K. C Nithyanantha and K. Viswalingam founded it and made it, within a few years, an indispensable institution in the lives of the displaced, dispossessed Tamils of North and East Sri Lanka. It was through TRRO he worked for the relief and rehabilitation of these people. With the able assistance of a dedicated team of helpers, he made TRRO a respected institution at international level.

Kantha did not have a life outside this area of relief and rehabilitation. His hobby and profession, his reading and travel, his discussions and writings were all about relief and rehabilitation.

It is this loss, the loss of a man with such dedication and vision that is irreparable.

TRRO is what Kantha made of it and the task of TRRO is to live up to that ideal, working tirelessly and unswervingly for the goals set by him.

In Tamil there is a tradition of referring to one's "pukaludampu" (the non-physical body of/in glory/fame). For Kantha, TRRO is that and should continue to be so.

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**Karthigesu Sivathamby, Chairman of TRRO is Professor of Tamil University of Jaffna, and has been Visiting Professor at the Universities of Uppsala (Sweden) and Madras (India).**

## KANTHASAMY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

*I. F. Xavier*

Before the year 1977 Kandiah Kanthasamy was little known amongst human rights activists and defenders of civil rights and liberties. He was a lawyer with a lucrative practice in the field of commercial law. His law chambers at Rosmead Place were frequented by business magnates and directors of limited liability companies.

The year 1977 was a turning point in his life. Due to racial riots in that year thousands of Tamils became refugees in various parts of Sri Lanka. With the help of K. C. Nithiyanantha and a few others he formed the Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation (TRRO) and was its first Secretary. Such was his honesty, integrity and sincerity, that there was a spontaneous flow of funds not only from Tamils but also from other nationalities in response to his appeal, and TRRO bid fair to become a formidable organisation under his leadership.

My association with Mr. Kanthasamy commenced with work preparatory to representations being made to the Sansoni Commission. I helped him in collecting affidavits from affected persons. He travelled to several parts of Sri Lanka to collect first hand information about incidents and devastation caused by racial violence. Day after day he went about

tracing witnesses and preparing documents for submission to the Commission. His dedicated service to fellow human beings and his unobtrusive and self effacing manner prompted those who were associated with him to follow his example.

Home for Human Rights, more popularly known to all as HHR, was his brain child. He was my friend, philosopher and guide in establishing HHR. An incident that happened at the late Mr. Kathiravelupillai's law Chamber touched his heart, a young woman with a two months' old baby (wife of one Wishweshwaran from Alvai) related her sad story of going round to lawyers and MPs to get her innocent husband released from prison. She could not get one single person to help her. Mr. Kanthasamy's view was that there should be an organisation to defend those taken into custody and detained under the PTA. The next morning he had completed drafting the aims, objectives and the constitution and project proposals of the Home for Human Rights. A senior lecturer from the Jaffna University, Mr. Kanthasamy and I were the first directors. During the early days, it was very difficult to run HHR, but Mr. Kanthasamy provided advice and guidance in the proper management of its affairs.

HHR documented details of arrests assaults, intimidation, detention, torture, killings and disappearances. Mr. Kanthasamy wanted nothing but the truth, so much so that he checked and rechecked information of human rights violations before publicising them.

He provided reliable information through the Tamil Information Centre, London to institutions and individuals interested in the preservation and protection of human rights. He also circulated reports and notes on human rights violations and related matters to all those who were active in this field.

He visited several areas to meet people adversely affected as a result of human rights violations for assessing their immediate needs, and arranged assistance to the deserving cases through organisations providing relief and rehabilitation.

Mr. Kanthasamy submitted appeals and memoranda to the United Nations Human Rights Commission and Sub Commission, and to other UN Bodies concerned with human rights. The briefs furnished by him formed the basis of discussions and reports of more than one international non-governmental organisations.

His work helped pave the way for Sri Lanka Human Rights violations to be taken up in the UN Sub Commission on Human Rights in 1983. His close and consistent work with international human rights activists' contributed to the passage of the resolution on Sri Lanka by the UN Human Rights Commission in 1987.

Concern for Tamil youth was foremost in his mind. He formulated many projects to rehabilitate youth affected by violence and detention. He was instrumental in HHR carrying out a successful medical programme for those affected by arrest and detention, and providing legal aid and allied services to some of the poor and needy PTA detenus. Kanthasamy has left behind indelible footprints in the sands of time. Let us follow his foot prints.

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**A lawyer and former Public Servant, I. F. Xavier, is the Director of the Home for Human Rights.**



## THE MAN LIVED NOT FOR HIMSELF BUT FOR MANKIND

### Maheswary Velautham

Mr. Kanthasamy's life was dedicated to service—a life of high thinking and plain living. I knew him from 1977. When he asked me to set up a Tamil Information Centre in Madurai for the collection and dissemination of correct information, I was given complete freedom to run it as I thought fit. Within a short time we expanded our activities by forming a subsidiary organisation called the Movement for Integration of Refugees and Repatriates, for relief work. Two medical units equipped with an ambulance were set up in Mandapam and Madurai. Both units catered to nearly one hundred thousand patients. Thousands of refugees enjoyed the benefit of various relief programs organised by us. It was under the guidance of Mr. Kanthasamy that we were able to achieve all this. He appreciated and encouraged our efforts to assist the affected people, and made light of the intimidation and harrassment of our male chauvinists in India. He stood by me and instilled into me the strength to face them.

I am indeed blessed in having had the chance to be associated with this elevated soul. Great and noble were his activities, undertaken in a spirit of reverence and sacrifice for society. The fruits of his actions are being enjoyed by our people in the North and East.

He never worked in a spirit of self-importance. He gave his body, mind and intellect for the welfare of the people without expecting applause or reward.

Instead of admiring the noble qualities of this great soul, the so-called revolutionary freedom fighters have rewarded him with death.

We just cannot understand why such great men should suffer such cruel treatment — maybe to bring about remorse and repentance at their departure.

Kanthasamy acted nobly without swerving from his ideals, never was afraid to do right, never hesitated.

Those who killed him have committed an enormous crime against our society. I still cannot bear the loss of this great man. I have lost a friend, guide and philosopher. To me he was more than a Mahathma.

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**Maheswari Velautham, an Attorney-at-Law had been in charge of the Tamil Information Centre and The Movement for Integration of Refugees and Repatriates, Madurai.**

## “ DO AS MUCH GOOD AS WE CAN ”

### S. Sivagnanam

“Work” might be the word that best sums up his life. “There is only one way”, he would so often say, “to justify the support we receive from NGOs, and only one way to wing further support: HONEST WORK.”

Mr. Kanthasamy's days were long with an average of fourteen hours of work every day, seven days of the week. He had helped to found the Central British Fund for Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation (CBFTRR) and the Tamil Information Centre (TIC) and continued to remain their fundamental source of inspiration and strength. From the way he devoted himself to the task, one could not have guessed that he was not a paid worker but only a volunteer. Knowing the motivation of the man, it was not difficult to understand why he worked so hard: the harder we work, the better the chance to bring an end to the violation of human rights and to alleviate the suffering of the victims of violence. That was his logic.

Not that his work did not take its toll on his health—he was a heart patient. The doctors had guaranteed him, at the time of the heart surgery in 1984, only five more years of life and warned him to avoid all stress. “None of us is here to live for ever”, he would say. “Let us make the best of the short span of our existence and do as much good as we can.”

Nothing would deter him from his dedication. Not the lack of financial reward: if that was what he wanted he would have carried on as the successful solicitor that he used to be. Nor the lack of popularity: in fact he shunned all publicity. Nor the lack of appreciation: it was more of criticism than of appreciation that he received. Nothing could undermine his enthusiasm. He had no time for self-pity or for revenge but only, WORK.

Amidst all the busy schedules, Mr. Kanthasamy never lost the sense of humanity. Defying all conventions, he refused to differentiate between persons in terms of status. Whether it be his fellow directors or the staff, all were the same to him and he himself would at once be the administrator and the peon.

My association with Mr. Kanthasamy was only since 1983 in my capacity as a director of the CBFTRR and TIC. But it did not take long to feel the impact of his noble character. And so I write these words as a tribute to Mr. Kanthasamy for his personal example and his immense contribution to the relief of the victims of violence and to the furthering of human rights.

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S. Sivagnanam was director of both the Tamil Information Centre and the Central British Fund for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation, London.

## CALM, UNDERSTATED AND EFFICIENT

Patricia Hyndman

I first met K. Kanthasamy at a Seminar on ethnic conflict in Holland in 1985, immediately prior to my departure on a mission to Sri Lanka on behalf of the LAWASIA Human Rights Committee. The next year I was to meet him again at the Tamil Information Centre in Clapham High Street when I was visiting London on LAWASIA business. By this stage, after being on two LAWASIA observer missions to Sri Lanka, I had become intensely involved in the tragic developments of the country. On the occasion of my visit K. Kanthasamy gave me a delicious cup of tea and introduced me to his fellow workers. He showed me around the Centre—with its computers, documentation systems and extensive networks of information gathering. Later I was to reflect that, in many ways, the Centre was a mirror of K. Kanthasamy's personality. It was calm, understated and efficient. It offered tireless, dedicated and totally trustworthy service in the interests of fellow Tamils no matter what the personal cost. A cost I know now included long hours of work, deteriorating health, and no financial reward, nor indeed the other rewards—prestige, accolades etc — not uncommonly heaped on lawyers of K. Kanthasamy's calibre and dedication.

From behind that initial impression, that understated presence, both in the case of the Centre and its staff, and in the case of K. Kanthasamy himself, emanated a support, friendship and warmth on which I and many others came utterly to rely. In my case — whatever my query, and despite all the logistical difficulties that being half a world away and

an 11 hours time difference can impose — I would always receive, within 24 hours, a helpful response followed by reliable and well documented information to assist me with whatever was the matter in hand. Many others, I am sure, could testify to this unflinching and devoted service, given selflessly and tirelessly, with no thought but that of providing much needed help and assistance to the suffering Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

I was to be in London again immediately after K. Kanthasamy's disappearance, and in fact in my ignorance of the tragedy, my call to establish contact with former Centre workers accidentally interrupted a meeting convened by them in an endeavour to plan a concrete strategy of action to try to find and help K. Kanthasamy. The grief, concern, distress and genuine love and respect shown by all those I met during that first anxious period were a testimony to the love, friendship and service that K. Kanthasamy had given to others during his lifetime.

It is both a tragedy and an irony that the life of such a man was taken, eventually, by a sector of that same community he had served with such selfless devotion.

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Patricia Hyndman, an Australian lawyer, is Secretary of the Human Rights Committee of LAWASIA.



## A CONSULTATION WITH KANTHA

Suren Wickremasinghe

As usual we were late for our late evening appointment with Kantha. He knew that with me 8.30 p.m. really meant 9 or 9.30, and greeted me with his typical broad smile and twinkle in his eye. The bare 100 watt bulb hung directly above his file-laden table made a pool of light in the centre of the room surrounded with leather bound books, and one could just notice the high carved ceiling of the wooden floor above. The Rosmead Place house belonged to a past era, and Kantha's room in the East Wing had a simplicity about it which was fascinating. This was the room in which many mysteries were sorted out. It remains in my memory as the room to which you came with your many problems, confident that you would leave with strategies and solutions worked out for every one.

Kantha never got tired, and would patiently listen to a long story of how the foreign contractors had bulldozed a whole hillock without notice or permission and were now objecting to the stoppage of work, and how the NHDA resident engineer had not released payment for deliveries of hollow blocks for 3 months and what significance this had on the fixed fee

contract, and so on and so forth. He was one of the best listeners I knew. Our consultation would go on long past midnight, and Kantha would silently go on making his notes. The tablefan would silently drum in the background, and Kantha would ask questions and discuss technical details that often only our Engineer Rajan could explain. Kantha was once a Maths teacher, and his analytical mind was extremely sharp and keen to find out all details of the problem.

"Fine then!" he would say at the end, smiling calmly, getting up from behind the heavy wooden table, his shirt brilliant white and starched and gathering his verti around his waist. "I'll have the drafts ready by six o'clock tomorrow morning."

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Suren Wickremasinghe is an architect; Kanthasamy was both friend and legal adviser to him.

# DEN TVERRPOLITISKE STØTTEGRUPPEN FOR TAMILENE ALL PARTIES SUPPORTING GROUP FOR TAMILS

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The Co-ordinator  
Kanthasamy Commemoration Group  
17 1/1, Charles Drive  
COLOMBO 3

Sri Lanka

30. April 1989

*It has been a shock for us to hear of the tragic fate of Mr. K. Kanthasamy, whose work at the Tamil Information Center is well known to us.*

*We, the all parties supporting group for the Tamils, which consist of members from 6 leading political parties of Norway, have been in function since the outbreak of violence in 1983 in Sri Lanka.*

*To carry out effectively our task of peace and justice we depend very much on reliable information. With regard to the Sri Lankan Problem, we could be confident of receiving up-to-date information from the TIC, thanks to the efficient running of the institution by Mr. K. Kanthasamy.*

*We can recall the many instances when we needed urgent information and it was dispatched to us immediately despite the short notice.*

*Combined with efficiency was credibility. Reports were presented with supportive documents and we invariably found them tallying with those of International Human Rights Organisations.*

*To Mr. Kanthasamy, who dedicated his life to human rights, peace and justice, we pay our tribute.*

## THE NORWEGIAN ALL PARTIES SUPPORTING GROUP FOR TAMILS

*Dagny Hysing Dahl*  
Dagny Hysing-Dahl

*Kirsten Hatlem*  
Kirsten Hatlem

*Harald Gammelsæter*  
Harald Gammelsæter

*Harry Frøysland*  
Harry Frøysland

*Erik Toppe*  
Erik Toppe

*M.P. Marit Wikholm*  
M.P. Marit Wikholm

*A.W. Johnsen*  
A.W. Johnsen

*Roald Zweidorf*  
Roald Zweidorf

*M.P. Svein Alsaker*  
M.P. Svein Alsaker

*Asbjørn Bjørnsæth*  
Asbjørn Bjørnsæth

*Ingvild Hakestad*  
Ingvild Hakestad

### Medlemmer av gruppen / Members of the group:

Dagny Hysing-Dahl - H, Kirsten Hatlem - H, Harald Gammelsæter - V, Harry Frøysland - DLF, Erik Toppe - SP, Marit Wikholm - AP, A. W. Johnsen - AP, Roald Zweidorf - KrF, Svein Alsaker - KrF, Asbjørn Bjørnsæth - SV, Ingvild Hakestad - SV

## KANTHA — HOW I LOST A FRIEND

Dr. Ron Rote

"Ron, is that you? Kanthasamy here. I have tried to call you many times"

"Kantha, Vanakkam! Where are you now?"

"I am at Heathrow, my flight leaves in half an hour. Just wanted to know if everything is alright with the family. Take good care of yourself, greetings to Marijke and the children....."

"Kantha, before you leave Europe, let me tell you how valuable you are .....so many people rely upon you, refugees in Europe, refugees and homeless in Sri Lanka. Please, take care, we need you, all of us need you."

"Ron, have to go now. We will meet. Some place, some time..... Vanakkam."

And these are the last words between Kantha and myself.

I remember the many moments we shared. In the late 1970s in the jungles and camps where the hill country Tamil refugees had been eking out a miserable life, full of uncertainty. The old man with his white hair who told us proudly: "On the estates we were slaves.....Here, even if I had to live on the water of this stream and the salt of my own sweat, here I want to live.....Here, I am a free man".

I remember Kantha's face, calm and intense as usual with this faint smile, the only sign which revealed his emotions.

The moments that we sat on his verandah in Colombo, discussing the fate of the Tamil people with "Raja", Dr. Rajasundaram, leader of the Gandhiyam Society who was so bru-

tally killed in the Welikade prison in July 1983, and with Dr. David, the tiny and tireless architect of his dream, a free Eelam. Raja, his wife Shanthi, David and myself, frequently joking with each other, while Kantha as usual dressed in black, frowning upon us, tried to remind us of the urgency of the time, the need for proper and well-designed plans to help Northern Tamils to build their own lives in the North.

I remember the many moments of deep pain and disillusion we shared when we heard about the massive killings of innocent Tamil citizens by the Sri Lankan army, when we were comfortably seated in my house in the Netherlands, or in his simple office in London.

I remember his grief and concern about the growing militancy among young Tamils, fighting a war against the Sri Lankan and Indian armies and often also against each other. As a true Gandhian Kantha could not condone this strategy, believing in the strength of mental power, social organisation and non-violent resistance.

I remember how he always remained who he was: modest, serious relentlessly dedicating his life, sacrificing his health, giving all his tremendous qualities of heart and mind to the cause of the poor and helpless.

I remember my own fear after he had decided to return to Sri Lanka to help Tamil refugees to once again lead a humane life. I intuitively knew that we would never meet again.

Kantha, if it is true that "friendship is just one soul in two bodies", then I have lost a friend.



But I gained more than I lost, that moment in June 1988, when you apparently were killed. Kantha had taught me the deepest meaning of the word "friendship", the oneness of the human soul, irrespective of religion, race or nationality.

I often miss you, my dear friend, your loving spirit is a source of inspiration to me in everyday's work.

Yes Kantha, I am certain that we will meet again. Some time. Some place.

Dr. Bon Rote of the Netherlands, is a former UNDP expert and resident representative of NOVIB in Sri Lanka.

## 'KANTHASAMY' - THE NOBLE SOUL

*Rev. Fr. A. Xavier Croos*

We came to know Mr. Kanthasamy, the great personality, recently — only in 1987; yet, he won the hearts of all those with whom he came in contact and left an indelible mark of high esteem in the minds of all. This sweet and soft spoken gentleman is no more with us. He spoke and wrote with authority and expertise and was accepted by all intellectuals around him. We knew Mr. Kanthasamy as a legal luminary, who sacrificed his lucrative practice for the service of humanity. He was sincere and serious in his actions and absolutely honest in his intentions. Thus he was most popular among all the foreign and local funding institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations of all which rated him as a reliable personality and an expert on humanitarian services.

People of the Mannar district and its generations to come will remember this noble genius Kanthasamy for the pains taken by him in the fulfilment of a restless moral urge to serve the affected and the needy. We remember with gratitude the days and nights he spent with MARR officials and with the representatives of the Norwegian Refugee Council for the formulation of several projects. The project assistance organised and promoted by Mr. Kanthasamy for the affected fishermen at Talaimannar

and Thalvupadu villages is now a reality and the implementation of these project activities are completed 361 affected fishermen who have returned from India as refugees in both villages received boats, engines and fishing gear as a measure of rehabilitation, and they earn their living. These villagers are grateful to Mr. Kanthasamy for his service.

He was committed to rehabilitation services and rendered commendable services for the alleviation of the sufferings of the affected people. Devoid of parochial interests or personal or political ambitions, he sincerely devoted his life for the betterment of the lives and livelihood of all the Tamil people. The loss of this dedicated social worker who sacrificed his life for the promotion of social justice and human dignity is a permanent loss to the Tamil Nation.

'KANTHA' as he was popularly known will always be remembered as a noble soul.

Rev. Fr. Xavier Croos is the President and Project Director of the Mannar Association for Relief and Rehabilitation (MARR)†

## TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED

Santasilan Kadirgamar

“How many ears must one man have

Before he can hear people cry  
How many deaths will it take till  
he knows

That too many people have died ”

(Blowing in the Wind—Bob Dylan)

In many ways the anti-Tamil riots of 1977 more than in 1956-8 or even the much publicised one in 1983 marks a turning point in the contemporary history of Lanka.

There was the acute need to focus on human rights violations and provide some relief to the displaced and those affected by violence. The post-1977 period saw the emergence of Peoples' Movements and Organizations, Citizens Committees and Human Rights groups and activists to meet these and other needs. In Colombo the Civil Rights Movement, which had been founded in 1971, made a valuable contribution in documenting and disseminating information on human rights issues. The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality was formed in Colombo in 1979 and its Jaffna Branch in particular did extensive documentation and organized meetings to protest the violations of human rights. The Home for Human Rights in Jaffna took over the task of documenting the cases of those

who had been detained, tortured or disappeared, and did an excellent job. In Jaffna the Organization for Non-Violent Struggle sought to educate and conscientise people on caste oppression. The short-lived Red Tamils Movement made an effort to give the whole Tamil movement a sense of direction. The Rural Labourers Union in the north provided non-formal adult education to workers and attempted to improve their conditions of work. In Colombo the Organization for Justice for Strikers with countrywide branches came into existence after the dismissal of thousands of workers who had gone on strike in 1980. The Vimukti-Dhamma Kendraya, an inter-religious group dedicated to the liberation movement both in the south and north, focussed on political visioning along principles closer to the spirit of authentic Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The Movement in Defence of Democratic Rights, the Centre for Society and Religion, the Social Scientists Association and numerous other groups emerged in Colombo focussing on political, economic and social issues. In the aftermath of three days of arson in Jaffna by the police including the destruction of the Jaffna Public Library in 1981 the Jaffna Citizens' Committee came into existence at Bishop's House, Jaffna. This Citizens' Committees became the model and pattern for numerous other committees that

spontaneously sprang up in the north and east.

The emergence of peoples' organizations in Lanka was not an isolated phenomenon. On a global scale the 70s marked the birth of numerous Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and a new partnership emerged of concerned groups in the First World interacting with peoples' movements in the Third World.

It also provided hitherto unavailable opportunities for oppressed minorities to carry their grievances to the United Nations, to appeal to the conscience of the world and to mobilise international support and world public opinion in support of their cause.

The outstanding individual who emerged among the Tamils in the context of this changing situation was Kanthasamy. The cause as he perceived it was to uphold and defend democratic and human rights in the midst of failures in state-man-ship, armed struggles and escalating brutalised violence. Even more important to him was to mobilise all the support possible within the country and abroad to help the poorest among the poor, the displaced, landless and homeless victims of anti-Tamil pogroms. Equally important on his agenda were the rights of those young men who were arbitrarily detained, the imprisoned, the tortured and the disappeared. He did not give up until he himself disappeared, a victim among the very people whose rights he so valiantly sought to defend, a victim to the senseless violence that the country is now trapped in.

As mentioned elsewhere in this publication he came to prominence immediately after the 1977 riots with the appointment of the Sansoni Commission. He was largely responsible for the establishment of the Saturday Review, the Theepam Institute, the Home for Human Rights, the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organization and several refugee rehabilitation schemes. He established the Tamil Information Centre in London in 1983 and became the key link on behalf of the Tamils with the world's Non-Governmental Organizations concerned with refugees and human rights. His credibility with these several organizations was high. This was due to several reasons such as his proved efficiency, his abilities as an administrator, his professional standing, hard work, perfect documentation, and his absolute trustworthiness in handling funds with full accountability to donors. He had the ability to identify appropriate persons who could handle the many projects he initiated. His ways were calm and humane, he never lost his sense of humour in spite of the adverse circumstances under which he had to work, and strikingly impressed to anyone who met him was his very simple lifestyle. These qualities made him a man with whom it was a privilege to work. He was a member of MIRJE and the Civil Rights Movement. He related to any group, Sinhalese or Tamil, that worked for the objectives that he cherished. He initiated the Amnesty International group in Jaffna fully convinced that people in Jaffna must be concerned about the violations of human rights in other parts of the world. Above everything else he was not involved in the pursuit of power.



He was free from the power game which some others with whom he related may have been involved in. The struggle for power and influence among Tamil groups both armed and unarmed has done irretrievable damage to what was a just struggle and is today the major cause for the predicament in which the Tamils find themselves. He was self-effacing to a fault.

From 1977 to 1983 though much of his work had to be done in Colombo he visited Jaffna at least once and sometimes twice a week. He moved from project to project on a scooter attending to every detail of the work undertaken. He was the man behind the scene, helping, advising and securing funds for people who were prepared to take the risk and have a job done. But the general public of the northern and eastern provinces hardly knew who he was. His name received no publicity until his now much publicised disappearance. The fact that he maintained such a low profile to some extent facilitated his kidnapping and disappearance. The circumstances under which he disappeared raises the whole question about the style of functioning of human rights and social workers in the kind of situation that now prevails in the whole island. Can and should such work be done by persons maintaining a low profile without an adequate mass base? In the Latin American and South African context some of the well known human rights and social workers have had a strong mass base and maintained a high profile. The base was readily available through church related organizations

and in many cases the left movement and community organizations.

For the kinds of projects undertaken under Kanthasamy's initiative funds were readily forthcoming. But there weren't enough volunteers willing to take the risk and give of their time. The sensational and demagogic politics pursued by Tamil leaders for over five decades had lulled the people's sensitivities and had conditioned them to wallow in a quagmire of emotions. Now nourishment for their emotions were being provided by every shot that the militants fired. By 1983 the space available for peaceful activity had diminished. The initiative and control passed to those who were organized for armed struggle. The Tamil Eelam cry and the romanticisation or armed struggle dominated the scene. The blind worship of the gun relegated everything else to the background. Some Tamil expatriates living in the comfort and security of the First World, who do nothing to support the cause of oppressed races and nationalities in their own neighbourhood, irresponsibly fuelled this emotion.

It was easy to raise the romantic cry of Tamil Eelam from London, New York and subsequently Madras while others, mostly the poor and under-privileged, paid the cost for it in loss of life and suffering.

Kanthasamy did not indulge in the rhetoric of liberation. He was not interested in emotional politics and slogans. As far as he was concerned there was a job to be done and he did it.

When the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Agreement was signed he seized the earliest opportunity to return to the country. He was right in doing so. After all what was the struggle about if it was not the welfare of the people living in the country. Kanthasamy was sensitive to and responded to the cry of pain and anguish raised by the people who were facing the bullets and brutal assaults in their own homes and villages. The struggle itself had been betrayed in more ways than one. He rightly sensed the mood of the Tamil people which was a yearning for peace and a return to normalcy. There were risks involved in his return.

Kanthasamy's answer was that there was work to be done and one must stand by the truth whatever happens. He was a man of action and of supreme courage. He had given up the security and comfort of a substantial legal practice and had given everything he had for what he believed was a just cause. Finally he gave his own life.

Kanthasamy's has been the most internationally publicised case of disappearances and political killings by Tamils of other Tamils. It is therefore appropriate at this juncture to take up the whole issue of political killings and internecine conflict. Not because Tamils killings Tamils is in any way different from Tamils killing Sinhalese and vice versa. It is because political killings among the Tamils and internecine conflict is the most serious problem, as far as the Tamils are concerned, that stands in the way of finding a solution to the national question.

This issue has plagued the Tamils since the first shots were fired in 1982 when a well known PLOTE activist Sundaram was killed allegedly by the Tigers. Within days revenge killings allegedly by PLOTE took place. Thereafter sporadic kill-

ings and kidnappings continued in Lanka and in Tamil Nadu.

In this internecine conflict many of those mercilessly slaughtered by rival Tamil organizations were boys in their early teens. Hundreds of ordinary Tamil citizens from all walks of life have been killed including teachers, farmers, workers, small shopkeepers, businessmen, students and social workers. Others have been intimidated, threatened, bullied and silenced. Some of the more publicised killings were those of politicians who chose to remain in Jaffna and of members of Citizen Committees.

In addition there have been killings of public servants, Government Agents and Assistant Government Agents who have kept the administration going under exceptionally difficult circumstances keeping the supply lines moving with essential goods including food, medicine and petrol.

These men stayed on at their posts to serve the people to the best of their ability under dangerous and trying conditions caught between Sri Lanka's security forces on the one hand and several Tamil Organizations engaged in brutal and bitter conflict among themselves on the other. Some of these men may have been forced to take a particular stand. Others may have done so of their own free will.

The emerging pattern which started early in the 1980s was to coerce if not to intimidate citizens' groups, peoples' organizations, administrators, businessmen and prominent individuals to act as front organizations or front men by rival armed groups. Eventually they became captives of the more powerful ones. The correct policy should have been for the armed organizations to establish fraternal relations with citizen's committees, student organizations, trade unions, administrators, intellec-



tuals and committed senior citizens and other individuals sympathetic to or involved in the struggle. Far from considering them rivals for power or puppet organizations to be used and manipulated they should have been allowed to function independently and pursue their respective aims with full freedom. With the Indo-Lanka accord all the armed organizations have returned to the north and east and have set in motion a process of revenge killings in which unarmed individuals who willingly or otherwise were identified with one group or other are being liquidated.

It is time that Human Rights Organizations fully documented the killings and disappearances that have occurred among ourselves as a people. It is a duty we owe to the memory of many innocent, decent people and their families. Above all it is a duty we owe to history to honour those who stayed on in the country and paid the supreme price. These lives have been taken by men brutalised by the nature of the conflict. It is a sordid story about which I as a Tamil feel deeply ashamed. It is an act of cowardice to walk into the homes of unarmed civilians or to drag them out of cars and buses and shoot them in cold blood! This is exactly what the Sri Lankan forces did and from which we as a people wished to be liberated.

In today's political scenario there are no militants, no liberators, and most of all no traitors. There are only the armed and the unarmed, some of the armed terrorising the unarmed. These assailants probably do not want political analysis and discussion. They do not want people to perform their duties or serve the people independent of their control or patronage. Intolerant of alternative viewpoints they are no better than Hitler's Gestapo blindly following orders. Democratic and human rights cannot be won by groups that do not encourage their cadres to think and analyse politically.

The Tamils have struggled and suffered, not to replace one form of authoritarianism with another which is far more brutal and painful in which Tamil kills Tamil. There are limits to armed struggles. The use of the gun as a weapon of defence is just and fair. To use the gun against the unarmed to intimidate, threaten, bully, terrorise, kidnap and mercilessly kill is a dastardly act that calls for nothing but utter contempt and universal condemnation.

The crying need at the moment is to go back to the point where we started and regain what has been lost, the purpose and goal of the Tamil struggle. We have to identify who our real friends and allies are. We have above everything else got to unite and stop intimidating and slaughtering unarmed people be they Tamils, Muslims or Sinhalese. The Tamil struggle began as a legitimate and just struggle of a persecuted and oppressed people for democratic and human rights. It was a struggle that sought to enable the Tamil people to live with dignity, self-respect and human rights in the security of their own homeland pursuing their economic and social welfare. It is a struggle that should have placed high on its agenda the rights of the plantation workers, and the landless labourers of the oppressed castes in Jaffna. If even at this late stage this is realized, Kanthasamy's loss and that of many thousands would not have been in vain.

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...Edited version of a long article.  
**Santasilan Kadirgamar** is a former Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of History, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, President of the Jaffna Branch of MIRJE, a founder member of the Jaffna Citizen's Committee and Director of the Theepam Institute. He is presently in Japan and part-time lecturer at several Universities including the University of Tokyo.



## K. KANTHASAMY — A PERSONAL NOTE

*Desmond Fernando*

I first met Kanthasamy in the chambers of the late N. Nadarasa. Nadarasa was one of the most brilliant lawyers of his time, specialising in company and commercial law and income tax. Kantha had a marvellous sense of humour, great personal charm and was excellent company; one soon became friends with him. In those days, Kantha was beginning to master and excel in the same fields of law as Nadarasa (for he was Nadarasa's standing junior) and given his superb mind and his skill as an advocate his success in the law was clearly assured.

In the late seventies as a result of pillage and destruction by communal violence a large number of people lost everything they had and were without food, clothes, houses or jobs. Kantha responded to this situation by reducing and later abandoning his practice and plunging into relief and rehabilitation work. Kantha made little either of his act of renunciation or the new, difficult and risky mission on which he now embarked, for he was self-effacing by nature. To his mission he brought the qualities of courage and dedication as well as great organising ability. He helped to form and run the settlements of the TRRO. Kantha cared deeply about human suffering and was greatly concerned at the plight of these helpless people.

Again, he wanted to lift the blanket of silence that lay heavily over Jaffna and his imaginative solution was **The Saturday Review** to inform the country and the world of what was happening in the North and East. He helped to found the paper in January 1981 and to raise finances for its publication.

Kantha also became Joint Secretary of the Sri Lanka branch of Amnesty International, members of which act on behalf of victims of human rights violations in countries other than their own. He had deep commitment to rights of human beings regardless of race or nationality. He was also a member of the Civil Rights Movement and his contributions to discussions were always logical and clear. In debate he was tolerant and courteous. He was highly disciplined and contributed substantially to the organisations to which he belonged.

He went to London in 1983 where he laboured for long hours in the field of human rights. His high standards of integrity resulted in his pursuit of unassailable hard facts. He had to pay the price for those long hours; his health broke down, he was hospitalised and ultimately had to undergo a by-pass operation. He returned to Sri Lanka in January 1988.

Once more he plunged into relief work. He did so although his health

was far from good, and of course he made quite an impact. Then a powerful militant organisation in the North gave him a grotesque ultimatum — either the relief work must be conducted under its aegis — or else. He refused to compromise. Ultimately he was abducted. He was, we hoped, perhaps held in an unknown place under unknown conditions. Almost a year has passed and the flickering flame of hope has now been snuffed out. Today we must face the fact that he lies in an unknown grave in an

unknown place. Yet in that grave lies interred a little bit of each of his friends which died when he did.

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Desmond Fernando, a lawyer is President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka and a member of the International Commission of Jurists. He is a former Secretary of Civil Rights Movement and Treasurer of the Sri Lanka section of Amnesty International.

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## A TRIBUTE FROM DIAKONISCHES WERK

*Rev. Dr. Hans-Otto Hahn*

In these days many people related to the struggle for human rights in Sri Lanka think of Mr. K. Kanthasamy. We, the staff, members of the board and director of our agency, respectfully join in the commemoration for Mr. Kanthasamy.

His fate is still unknown, but circumstances make us fear the worst possibility, that he died at the hands of those who abducted him. We deplore the fate of this man as much as we deplore the fate of so many other people in Sri Lanka who became victims in this terrible conflict that destroyed peace in Sri Lanka. — We keep them all in our prayers. We will keep Mr. Kanthasamy in our memory as an ardent worker for justice and for the restoration and protection of peace, development, human rights and human dignity in his country.

Mr. Kanthasamy first came to our knowledge and acquaintance in the early 1980 ies. We learned about him that as a lawyer he had become an active and very able defender of the human rights of the Tamils, especially the plantation workers, who since 1977 had fled from the violence that sprung up during the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka in the late 70 ies.

As we do represent a Christian organisation working worldwide for development, relief in natural and manmade disasters, peace, human rights and the protection and promotion of human dignity. Mr. Kanthasamy came to alert us on the conflict that at this early time hardly was visible nor was it known to the outside world. He did the same with other non-governmental organisations, and thus he spread knowledge about

the dangerous situation in his country.

Mr. Kanthasamy explained to us in great detail the root causes, the dimensions and the prospects of the evolving conflict and he did not spare us from the cruel details of the violence and the atrocities committed against his people in the cities and villages of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

We did compare his accounts with reports we could obtain from other sources. We were impressed by the accuracy and the fairness with which he did present and explain the conflict to us.—We learned in those years during which we worked together, that his interest was the restoration of peace, the selfdetermination of his people against domination, the reconciliation between the hostile sectors of the Lankan society. He did not preach hatred. The opposite was true: in his farsighted and sober-minded way he was working with all his energy and personal resources for a peaceful settlement in this gruesome communal conflict, which reminded the observer more and more of Northern Ireland or Cyprus.

This is how a lasting relationship was built, that was based on trust and high esteem. We worked for the same humanitarian goals.

Mr. Kanthasamy not only was a man of good intentions, but also of action. He was a very efficient manager of refugee rehabilitation projects and the same was true for his service in the field of Human Rights. Being far from ideological narrow-mindedness he became a partner with whom it was always possible to raise questions of policy as well as of practicability, we could rely on his word, as much as we tried to be a reliable partner in these difficult times.

Mr. Kanthasamy totally dedicated the last 10 years of his life for Human rights and the rehabilitation work with refugees. Finally he became a refugee himself. This did not stop him to carry on with his work.

He changed his place of stay, but not his dedication and determination to work for a peaceful and just solution of his country's deep rooted problems and divisions.

Mr. Kanthasamy returned to his country when there seemed to be light at the end of the tunnel despite all the doubts that remained after the Indian-Sri Lankan Peace Acord. For him that was not an easy decision but he stuck to it ever after it became obvious that the conflict would persist, that only the actors had changed. In the changed international and national political setting his possibilities to work for conflict resolution from exile had declined. He was too impatient to stay outside the country while he knew that the suffering went on and that there were not enough able and experienced people who dared to work for rehabilitation, peace and human rights.

But a man and humanitarian leader like him was too likely to stand in the way of those sectarian political groups and radical movements who in the scattered political landscape of Sri Lanka would only tolerate their own way of political thinking and doing.

We do not know what really happened to him. He shared the fate of so many human rights workers around the world who became victims because of their commitment and dedicated work for a better world, in which conflicts should be resolved in a way, that respects human dignity and human rights.

Mr. Kanthasamy has set an example and in writing this, we share the hope that his struggle and sacrifices were not in vain.

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**Rev. Dr. Hans-Otto Hahn is Director of Diakonisches Werk of the Evangelical Church of Germany, which also administers the BREAD FOR THE WORLD programme.**



## HIS HOPE AND DREAM

*A. George Ninan*

My association with Kanthasamy started some time in 1980, when I was working as an Executive Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia. From 1980 to 1983 I visited Sri Lanka three or four times and met Kanthasamy who shared with me his fears, anxieties, hopes and aspirations related to the life and struggle of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. In 1982 he organised my trip to the north and made it possible for me to get acquainted with the situation there. After his departure to UK I met him several times and visited him at the Tamil Information Centre in London.

During these meetings and occasions for interaction, I was exposed to the sincerity, commitment and selfless attitude of Kanthasamy. I could not help but admire his dedication to the cause he believed in. While in London he kept in touch with me by detailed reports of the TIC and letters expressing his views on developments in Sri Lanka. We were sorry to hear about his heart

attack while in London and were happy to see him recovered and active once again. His disappearance from the scene is a great loss for the Tamil cause and also for Sri Lanka as a nation.

While there seems to be no point in hoping that he is still alive, one cannot help but continue to hope. His dedication and total commitment will ever shine as an example of challenge to all involved in the struggle for justice and peace. We, his friends in Asian ecumenical circles share the sorrow and pray for lasting peace with justice for the land and people of Sri Lanka, which was his hope and dream.

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**A. George Ninan is Associate General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia.**

## DEVOTION TO HONESTY, DEDICATION TO A JUST CAUSE

*M. Sivasithamparam*

Even after one year, it is difficult to imagine that Kantha is no longer with us. Yet it seems to be true that Kantha who has never hurt even a fly whose only mission in life was to alleviate the suffering of his fellow humans was kidnapped and killed for no reason.

I first came in close touch with him, when way back in 1977, he and I worked together in the Chambers of the late Mr. M. Thiruchelvam, Q.C., during the trial-at-bar. The trial-at-bar was yet another watershed in the history of the Eelam Tamils, when the hands of unity were drawn yet closer together. Kantha played an important role in getting together all the known legal talent to appear at the trial. From then on, I have watched his monumental effort in the Eelam Tamil Cause.

After the Parliamentary elections of 1977, serious anti-Tamil riots broke out. I saw Kantha's simple courage in driving into riot-bound areas in and around Colombo and rescuing Tamils, his twenty-four hour vigil to feed and help those unfortunate victims of racial hatred, herded together in the Bambalapitiya Hindu College and temples.

As part of the same task, he organised the settlement of displaced Tamil plantation workers in the Wanni districts. It was during these operations that the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation organisation and Gandhiyam were set up. But the powers that he could not countenance even such humanitarian work. Kantha left the island at this time. Had he remained in Sri Lanka, he would have been hacked to death in the same way Dr. Rajasundaram was killed in the high security goal of Welikade.

In London, he organised the Tamil Information Centre. Very soon, he

and his band of young men and women spread the horrendous news in the capitals of the civilised world. TIC's counter part in Madras kept Delhi fully informed. Sri Lankan government got rattled by this barrage of harrowing news and sent high-powered delegations to counter these news.

But the world preferred to believe Kantha because his sincerity, the plain unvarnished truth, his devotion to honesty and his dedication to a just cause far out-shone the diplomatic news manipulations of the Sri Lankan government. Kantha never sought the lime-light and this gave added credence to what he said.

On his initiative, I went to the Scandinavian countries in 1987. Kantha's name opened every door of governmental and non-governmental organisations. He had built up such a degree of credibility in these countries that they would commit millions of dollars trusting only his word. Not one cent of this money went into his private pocket.

After the Indo-Sri Lanka accord, Kantha thought the era of publicity was over and an era of rehabilitation must start. He wound up the T.I.C. in London, came to Madras and then to Sri Lanka. He never thought that Fate had willed otherwise.

We do not even know where his mortal remains are. But, he will live ever green in the fond memories of all those thousands for whom he lived worked and died.

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**M. Sivasithamparam, a lawyer, is a former President of the Tamil United Liberation Front. He is a former member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.**

## MR. K. KANTHASAMY — A MAN OF ACTION

*Saroja Sivachandran*

He will always be remembered as a fine personality. Anyone who had the good fortune to know him cannot fail to feel a void on hearing of his untimely departure from our midst. Those of us who have known him for many years always cherished for him a love and respect. The news of his disappearance was shattering.

One could record many things about him from a succession of memorable scenes from the past — Kanthasamy as a successful lawyer, as a human rights activist, as a social worker, and as a man of action. Above all, Mr. Kanthasamy was a politically and socially conscious individual, caring about and working to remedy the tribulations of the nation and the community.

Although I had heard about Mr. Kanthasamy for some years, I first came to know him personally when he attended a conference at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute in Colombo. His simple outlook and the interest shown in working with people, promoting human rights in general, and the alleviation of the sufferings of the Tamils in particular, made many of us take a deep interest in his activities. Later we came to know that he was the man behind so many umbrella organisations concerned with research and rehabilitation work.

For some time he was away from Sri Lanka, but when the opportunity

arose he did not hesitate to return to his motherland. He had great and creative plans before him. On his return, while the wounds of the immediate post-Accord violence had yet to be healed, he boldly toured the north and east of the country to assess the damage at first hand.

My last meeting with him was when he paid a sudden visit to my residence on Saturday 18 June 1989. I was so delighted to see him at my home and never dreamt that it would be his last visit. It is so sad and terrible that I will never meet him again.

The problems of women and a farsighted plan for setting up a women's organisation was one of his pet ideas. His visit was mainly with this in mind and he made me realise it by saying that he had chosen the right person for the right job. The following day, however, we heard about his disappearance. It was a shock, not only to us, but to so many people who knew him through his work.

Kanthasamy was a man of action — a go-getter if ever there was one. He was the prime mover in several outstanding ventures. Hardly any other individual has brought as much courage and enthusiasm to the Tamil cause as Kanthasamy did. Thousands of refugees remain huddled in unbelievable misery, with no future and



hardly any hope. Life goes on for the people, but that is all — the old, the young, women and the new-born, all victims of a terrible racial conflict. What is their future?

Mr. Kanthasamy moved very closely with people and extended his unstinted co-operation at all times. Though a strict disciplinarian, his heart was brimful of gentleness and sympathy. He had a great affection for the ordinary people. He was so popular that, with his legal background, he could have been a successful politician, but he had no ambition for power and position. A bachelor, he devoted his life to the Tamil people, and had no interest in luxury or physical comfort. It is very sad that

he is no more with us to see the development of his organisations.

The Tamil community has lost one who still had many years of service to give. What none could foresee was that Kanthasamy's life would soon come to an end so abruptly. It is left to others to carry on his work. We are resolved that Kantha's labours should be continued. This would have been his wish and our memorial by which to honour him.

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Saroja Sivachandran is Director Centre for Women and Development (Women's Awareness Programme) Jaffna.

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## A MAN WHO STOOD FOR JUSTICE

### *V. Arumugam*

Mr. K. Kanthasamy was a man who worked for the cause which he believed in, no matter what the risk to himself personally; otherwise, he could not have achieved what he did. He played a leading role in the rehabilitation of innumerable refugees who had suffered in the turbulent period of the late seventies in Sri Lanka. His task was all the more difficult because he had not only to formulate schemes but also to find the money for their implementation. It is to his credit that he achieved great success on both fronts.

With his unassuming and self-effacing approach, Kantha was able to venture into arenas which anyone else would have hesitated to enter. It was this aspect of his personality that endeared him to everyone who came in contact with him. Yet he was

an individual who was never afraid to state his opinion and stand by it.

I had the opportunity of working with him from 1981 as a member of the Theepam Institute, Jaffna. Theepam was his brainchild, and is involved in academic work and research which seeks to present the truth about events and situations affecting the national policy. The fact that the Institute is able to fund or undertake research in allied fields is a tribute to Mr. Kanthasamy. It was his vision and energy that put the Institute on a sound footing from the start.

All of us who knew him and worked with him miss him a lot. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word—a man in a generation.

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V. Arumugam is Chairman and Counsellor, Theepam Institute, Jaffna.

## WHAT LOW BRUTISHNESS WAS THAT ?

*David Selbourne*

"The disappearance and probable death of poor Kanthasamy has afflicted me like no other horror of the Sri Lankan Disaster. He was one of the very best and most honest of men, equal to twenty of your Prabhakarans and other such tinpot heroes, who are leading the Tamils towards a long term political and moral disaster, which the present savagery of the conflict, and the resolutions of support from this or that useless conference, prevent them from seeing.

That EROS could do this, and get away with it with such little genuine Tamil condemnation, condemns the Tamil cause itself to perdition. But there is no need for me to condemn it. It is self-condemning, and after all, who am I? In any case, the Tamil cause itself, as a moral struggle for justice, had begun to be lost once the killings of innocent Sinhalese citizens, at the hands of Tamil "freedom fighters", had begun a few years ago. Moreover, despite the struggle, I now think that there will neither be Eelam, nor 'true' federalism, nor genuine devolution, nor anything else which is just and fair to the Tamils this century, if ever. I had not wanted to say this out in the open earlier, because it would have lent some legitimacy to the wickedness of Colombo, which is incorrigible also. But since the presumed death of Kanthasamy I think that such silence is pure cowardice.

As for your role, it will always be remembered as absolutely heroic in its way, and you could do no less, and no more, than you have done. You were right to do it. But the truth is that it makes no difference to the fact that the Tamils have lost the moral war—and will eventually lose the political one also even though they have 'won' a few of the guerrilla mi-

litary battles, and will go on 'winning' this or that encounter in the next 10 years. They will also go on bumping off innocent Sinhalese citizens — an easy matter to achieve — just as Sinhalese (and now Indians) will go on bumping off innocent Tamils. But without morally worthy and politically significant leaders the Tamils will get nowhere. Their struggle has often been courageous, but it has not got them where they think it has got them. You know that I don't think them any nearer real and lasting political advances now than they were five years ago. Your compatriots are far too skilful (and cynical) for them. But abducting and killing Kanthasamy! What low brutishness was that? What does it say of the men who did it? Answer: they are no better than the drunken gangsters who killed Rajasunderam in Welikade Prison....."

From a letter to Dr. Brian Seneviratne dated 1 September 1988 "Kanthasamy's death dwarfs everything. I remain shocked and disheartened by it to this moment..... People have become used to suffering and one death among so many that assail us has become tragically a trivial matter."

From a letter to Suriya Wickremasinghe dated 19 April 1989.

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**David Selbourne**, a former lecturer in political theory at Ruskin College, Oxford, is the author of several books and a regular contributor to the British newspapers *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *The Sunday Times*. He has taken a keen interest in human rights in Sri Lanka, on which he has written and spoken frequently, espousing in particular the cause of justice for the Tamils.



## COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY FOR ALL

*Charles Abeysekeru*

Kanthasamy was committed to the ideals of justice and equality among the different ethnic groups inhabiting this country and to the ideal of all citizens living in peaceful enjoyment of their human rights.

He worked with numerous organisations in the pursuit of these ideals, but it is primarily of his work with MIRJE (Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality) and its implications that I want to speak in this brief note.

MIRJE was founded in July 1979 on the basis of agreement with the following basic propositions:

1. There should be equality of all rights among the various racial and linguistic groups in the country. Hence communalism and racial injustice and discrimination in all their overt and covert forms should be resisted in every manner possible.

2. Action should be taken without delay to redress the grievances of the Tamil people in the areas of language, land settlement, education, employment and the repressive activity of the security forces.

Kanthasamy was among the 93 persons and organisations who first came together with these objectives. He thereafter participated in every MIRJE activity, working with conscious effort towards the realisation of these

aims; he was, within MIRJE, an articulate contributor to discussions of current situations and an active participant in the shaping of its policies and activities.

Kanthasamy left Sri Lanka before the riots of July 1983, a temporary absence that became unexpectedly prolonged. Of his work abroad, others will speak; here, I want to speak of one facet of his interest that goes to show his total commitment to the ideal of human rights.

He was aware of the increasing opposition to the peace settlement following the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987 and of the rising tide of Sinhala chauvinism; he was conscious that this situation might jeopardise the tenuous political structure that had promised to put an end to violence. Yet, at the same time, he was conscious that persons had a right to hold certain political opinions and to act on those opinions, and that this right should not be subject to state repression. He was in constant communication with me, asking me about the oppressive measures taken by the state and the security forces in the south of the country and constantly urging me to take up, within MIRJE, and in other human rights organisations, this question. For him, as well as for us, democracy was indivisible; as Rosa Luxemburg said: "Freedom is always the freedom for others to think differently".



It is in line with these principles that MIRJE has freely made available its legal aid facilities to all those who become victims of political and state repression, without consideration for their political beliefs.

Kanthasamy, since his return to Sri Lanka, was principally concerned with rehabilitation and reconstruction projects among the Tamil people who had suffered the ravages of war for over a decade. He was aware that the restoration of peace and national reconciliation were tasks that had yet to be faced and that these tasks involved working towards the democratic restructuring of our society. It was in this context that we were discussing, in April last year, some mechanisms of alerting liberal opinion all over to the increasing repression and authoritarianism of the Sri Lankan state.

Kanthasamy's concern has implications for all of us. We believe that Sri Lankan society is multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious; it must evolve political structures and forms of civil social organisation that respect, reflect and give full play to this pluralistic character; it must evolve a non-chauvinist ideological foundation that will be fully supportive of such structures. Yet, this evolution must take place through demo-

cratic means, through ideological persuasion. It cannot take place through repression; neither can intimidation, murder and terror be permitted to impose on the people a contrary point of view. Chauvinism cannot be allowed to impose itself on the people, of whatever ethnic origin, by the force of the gun. We therefore tread a narrow path; we oppose all attempts by chauvinists to foist their own, narrow parochial, ethno-centric views on society through ideological and physical repression. At the same time, we are committed to the principle that even a chauvinist has the democratic right to hold an opinion and to give it democratic expression. We must fight their views, but conduct our struggle democratically.

How narrow this path is, is well illustrated by Kanthasamy's fate. Knowing that it could well be our fate too, we yet dedicate ourselves to the struggle for peace and democracy for which Kanthasamy and so many others laid down their lives.

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**Charles Abeysekera, a former public servant, is President of the Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE).**

## A GENTLE AND EFFECTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

### Sreelata da Costa

My contact with Kanthasamy came from his longstanding involvement with the Amnesty International movement in Sri Lanka as a volunteer.

He was responsible for initiating the work of the Amnesty International group in Jaffna in 1981 and faithfully travelled every month to meet the members and encourage and support them in their activities.

The fact that there remain active AI supporters in Jaffna today keen on working for victims of human rights violations in other parts of the world bears eloquent testimony to his tirelessness. Even while on holiday he worked as a volunteer at the legal office of the International Secretariat, reading documents and commenting on them on behalf of the staff who came to

know his painstaking and meticulous work.

He was one of the gentlest and most effective human rights activists in our movement and among the most modest. His devotion owed much to his vision of an international community and national society at peace. This was perhaps the source of his strength and the cause to which he devoted himself.

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Sreelata da Costa works in the Campaign and Membership Department of the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London.

## KANTHASAMY'S CONTRIBUTION WAS MONUMENTAL

P. Rajanayagam

I do not propose to speak about Mr. Kanthasamy as a person or about his work since there are many here who are going to do that. Why I very willingly agreed to speak at this meeting was because, as Edmund Burke said, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing'. And Kanthasamy was a good man who has contributed a great deal to fight evil.

Although I did know Kanthasamy in Sri Lanka, I came to know him rather closely since his arrival in the UK and the formation of the Tamil Information Centre. That was the time when some of us were struggling to focus international attention on the plight of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. That was the time when relatively few expatriate Tamils were prepared to spare even a few minutes to give thought to the plight of their own brethren in Sri Lanka.

The thick blanket thrown around the plight of the Tamil people by the government of Sri Lanka was blown off in 1983 when the international media burst into flaming headlines in the aftermath of one of worst tragedies to strike the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the island-wide anti-Tamil violence of July-August 1983. The international community became aware of the sheer scale and magnitude of the violence and violations committed against the Tamil people.

From then on, the struggle of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka assumed an international character with the government launching an anti-Tamil propaganda war and Tamil expatriate groups with enormous assistance from sympathetic international human rights organisations making every effort possible to counter the government's campaign. And in this campaign, Mr. Kanthasamy and the Tamil Information Centre of which he was the backbone played a crucial role.

In the following years, with the escalation of the ethnic conflict and the government's efforts to ruthlessly suppress Tamil resistance militarily, the Tamil people were subjected to some of the gravest violations of human rights. Thousands became victims of arbitrary summary executions. Many more thousands were detained without trial for prolonged periods. Detainees were tortured as a matter of routine and hundreds died in custody. An estimated 2000 simply 'disappeared.'

In spite of strenuous efforts of obstruction by the government, most of these atrocities were brought out into the open on an international scale. It is the human rights abuses which accompanied the attempt by the government to suppress Tamil struggle by draconian and military means that attracted a measure of



international legitimacy to their struggle. The Tamil struggle for the restoration of their fundamental rights was fought on an international platform of human rights. The basis of this platform was the many reports by reputed international human rights organisations, those of Amnesty International in particular.

My friends, these reports which helped to advance the Tamil cause internationally did not materialise from nowhere. The material and evidence that gave credence and validity to these reports were the result of hard and dedicated work by individual human rights activists. At great risk and cost to themselves, they collected, collated and documented volumes upon volumes of human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. Some constituted themselves into Citizens Committees and Relief Organisations which became the only bodies to which the suffering and helpless ordinary people could turn to complain and seek assistance.

Since October 1987 with the IPKF offensive against the LTTE, grave atrocities have been committed against non-combatant civilians. While some independent human rights activists have continued their difficult task of gathering evidence of these atrocities, I have heard, some expatriate Tamils lament that there is a conspiracy of silence by the international media. There may be substance in that allegation. But we must not forget one fundamental fact. The source of any information is as important as the truthfulness of that piece of information itself. It is in this context, the existence and work of human rights activists and

citizens committees or relief organisations who are perceived by others to be independent become important. Whatever may be the truth of any piece of information, if the source of that information is perceived to be biased or manipulated, such information would not attract the acceptance and credibility it deserves. Any attempt to influence, pressurise or manipulate sources of information which are perceived to be independent would therefore be counter-productive and self-defeating.

The Tamil struggle is basically a struggle for the fundamental rights of the Tamil community as a people. That struggle must of necessity include the recognition of the democratic rights of each member of community. Each member of the community must have the right and the freedom to decide for himself the part he or she wants to play in that struggle. Some have taken up arms. Some decide to advance the cause through concentrating their effort on human rights and humanitarian work. And it is to this latter category that the Kanthasamys, Chandra Fernandos, Sam Thambimuthus, Xaviers, and many others belonged. Sam Thambimuthu was sought to be neutralised and silenced by threats and intimidation. Fr. Chandra Fernando was gunned down in his own church precincts. Kanthasamy's eventual 'disappearance' and probable death were preceded by a sustained and relentless campaign of intimidation and threat directed at him over a period of several months. Some others have already left Sri Lanka following threats. The sheer arrogance of those who feel powerful with their

guns is only matched by the enormous damage they have inflicted upon the cause of the Tamil community.

Kanthasamy was a simple and unassuming man. His strength was his total dedication and perseverance he brought to bear upon whatever task he undertook. If the mass of the people remain unaware of the monumental contribution he made in the field of human rights and relief and rehabilitation work, it is because he deliberately and studiously shunned publicity.

The danger faced by independent human rights and humanitarian workers in Sri Lanka is obvious for every one to see. In the south, the JVP has targeted independent human rights activists and organisations who have carried on their work impartially and highlighted the violations of human rights committed against the Tamil people. In the Tamil areas the same situation prevails. The seriousness with which the international human rights and humanitarian community view this dangerous development became apparent during the recently held sessions of the UN Sub-Commission on human rights when Non-Governmental Organisations and several Sub-Commission experts raised this question with specific reference to the murder of Fr. Chandra Fernando and the abduction of Kanthasamy.

There are those Tamils who feel reluctant to publicly raise or discuss the issue of the 'disappearance' of Kanthasamy and other human rights violations committed by those who claim to fight for 'liberation' and 'freedom'. They allege that raising such issues and holding meetings such as this one divert the attention of the people from the main issue. I do not accept that. The words 'liberation' and 'freedom' ring hollow when defenceless and unarmed people are gunned down in cold blood or made to 'disappear' without trace. The touchstone of the moral validity of the Tamil struggle depends upon the willingness and the courage to defend what is right and condemn that which is wrong. The power of the gun should not be allowed to turn what is wrong into right.

Let me conclude with a quote from Martin Luther King: "The greatest tragedy of this period of social transition could not be the strident clamour of the bad people but the appalling silence of the good people." Let us, as good people, be not silent and have the courage to speak up when evil is striking at the heart of the moral basis of our struggle.

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**Text of a speech at a meeting in London on 25 September 1988 in connection with the abduction of Kanthasamy, P. Rajanayagam, a lawyer, is President of the Standing Committee of Tamils (SCOT) and Editor of THE TAMIL TIMES, London.**

## THE TRAGEDY OF K. KANTHASAMY : A DISASTER FOR THE TAMIL CAUSE

Paul Sieghart

What a few stupid and cowardly men have done to one brave and good man—and what the rest of the community to which they all belong seems to have been unable to stop—has put the entire Tamil cause back by twenty years.

K. Kanthasamy is (I desperately hope I can still say “is”, and do not have to say “was”) someone of whom the Tamil people of Sri Lanka have every reason to be proud. He is an outstanding lawyer. Had he wished to, he might have followed the example of many of his colleagues: kept to well-paid commercial work, and made a great deal of money. Instead, he answered the call of his people in need, and devoted all his time and talents to the relief of their suffering. He was a founder member, and the first Secretary, of TRRO, the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation, and also helped to found the Theepam Institute. For more than ten years, and at increasing risk to his health, he worked indefatigably for the relief of people in need, and for the vindication of their human rights. He played an active part in the Tamil Information Centres in London, Madras, and Madurai. By his work, and the international respect he gained through it, he made a huge contribution to the recognition of the Tamil cause throughout the world.

As his reward, he has been kidnapped by a group of militants who claim to be working for the same cause as his. They call themselves EROS, the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers. First they threatened him, saying they would disrupt any rehabilitation work that did not conform with their policy — while refusing to say what their policy was. Then they threatened TRRO. Finally, on 19 June, they came to his residence in a van and took him away. Three months have gone by since then and Kanthasamy has not been seen again.

During a live broadcast in the BBC World Service earlier this year, in which President Jayewardene and I both took part I accused his security forces of arranging “disappearances”. I am profoundly shocked that I now have to repeat that accusation, this time against men who claim to be engaged in the liberation of their countrymen from oppression by those very same forces.

Making some one “disappear” is among the most contemptible things that men of violence do to those whom they fear. Whoever does it thereby renders themselves contemptible, whether they call themselves freedom fighters or security forces. And in invoking the world's justified contempt



for their actions, they bring it down also on the cause they profess to serve.

Apart from this shocking act, I know nothing of EROS. But I have a simple message for them. Here it is:

“If you think that you have ever done anything for the liberation of your people, you have now wilfully thrown it away. Without support in the international forum outside your Island, Tamil liberation is a lost cause. That support depends critically on outstanding men like Kanthasamy. If he is hurt, or killed the support is forfeited, and it is you who are responsible for that. So, if your professed concern for the liberation of your people is genuine, then for their sake I ask you to release him at once.”

I hope that someone who reads this message will ensure that it is delivered to those to whom it is addressed. And I also hope that the many others who will read it, or hear of it, will do all they can to ensure that my call is answered.

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**Paul Sieghart, who issued this appeal in September, 1988, was an eminent English lawyer, an international arbitrator, and an outstanding expert in and author of many publications on international human rights law. He was Chairman of the European Human Rights Foundation, and of the British Section of the International Commission of Jurists. Sieghart visited Sri Lanka on behalf of the ICJ in 1984 (vide his report Sri Lanka—a Mounting Tragedy of Errors published by the ICJ). He died in December, 1988.**

## LOST HIS LIFE IN HELPING THE HELPLESS

Fritz Kodagoda

"The many men so beautiful,  
And they all dead did lie!

And a million million slimy  
things

Liv'd on — and so did I."

S. T. Coleridge.

I first met K. Kanthasamy in 1957 when he was a senior at Voet's Inn, the Law College Hostel which was then housed in a majestic mansion at 19, Barnes Place, Colombo 7. Freshers entered the portals of Voet's Inn with a real sense of trepidation. The seniors who (really were only three-fourth baked lawyers) seemed only too willing to play the traditional role of making life difficult for the freshers. But Kantha's kindly nature was a reassuring factor. He did not believe in humiliating or embarrassing anyone even in jest. He was reserved but interested in the welfare of others. His instinctive interest in helping the disadvantaged was evident even at this stage in his life. He was always cheerful and had a homely sense of humour. He had been a teacher at St. Annes' College, Kurunegala before he took to law. Even though he was a law student himself and engaged in part time employment, he went out of his way to help junior students whenever they needed assistance.

My next significant contact with Kantha was in 1978 after he had

established joint Law Chambers with his close friend Sittampalam. I had returned from London and West Germany after gaining valuable experience in human rights work. I remember walking in to Kantha's chambers at Rosmead Place. I was in a hurry to get back to Kurunegala and I found Kantha busy preparing a case but he insisted that I spend some time with him. He put his work aside and listened to my experiences for nearly two hours. It was then that he evinced an interest in Amnesty International.

Very soon we were members of the Board and Kantha a Jt. Secretary of the Sri Lankan National Section. This was a period when the national section was most active.

Amnesty International has a very practical working principle. It is that members do not in their AI capacities engage in activities connected with human rights violations in their own countries (with certain exceptions.) Kantha was not content to work only on behalf of unfortunate people in other parts of the world. He felt the urge to help in the rehabilitation of refugees in his birthplace. He succeeded in securing relief to thousands about whom none seemed to care. He was overworked and broke down in health while in London. When reasonably recovered he involved himself in human rights work again. He could have stayed there in safety

and comfort but he preferred to come back as he knew that his own people needed his help more than ever. He lost his life in the noble effort of helping the helpless.

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**Fritz Kodagoda, a lawyer, is Secretary of the Amnesty International Sri Lanka Group 1, Kurunegala.**

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## **A MESSAGE FROM THE SOUTH ASIA BUREAU**

**Walter Keller**

Mr. Kanthasamy has been an associate and a good friend of the South Asia Bureau. We are personally aware of his contributions in the field of defending Human Rights as well as his untiring struggle for the justice of the Tamils.

He has been a pioneer in organising a number of activities ranging from resettling and rehabilitating the people affected as a result of ethnic violences, providing legal assistance to the victims of ethnic injustices and internationalising the cause of Tamils.

After a brief period abroad he returned to Sri Lanka to continue his services in order to reconstruct the destroyed areas of the Northern and Eastern provinces. We were shocked

to hear that he was abducted and probably killed. We condemn this act of brutality.

We are glad to learn that some of his friends are making arrangements to publish a commemoration souvenir to mark the first year of his abduction. We sincerely expect that through this effort Mr. Kanthasamy's name will be engraved in a proper place in the annals of history of the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

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**Walter Keller, on behalf of South Asia Bureau, Grosse Helmstrasse 58, 4600, Dortmund 1, West Germany.**

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## KANTHASAMY AS I KNEW HIM

Dr. K. Velauthapillai

Kanthasamy was a mysterious person whose disappearance remains a mystery to this day. His disappearance remains a grievous shock to those who have known him. As for me, I knew him and yet I did not know him. I say I did not know him because, when I think back to when I first knew him, there was no indication that he had such a capacity to work for the human race, and to link human beings all over the world to focus attention on the sufferings of human beings in this small island of ours. Those who knew his earlier life would not imagine that he possessed and developed such a potential for ameliorating human suffering.

I came to know Kanthasamy during the latter half of the nineteen forties when we were pupils at Jaffna Hindu College. Both of us hailed from villages and we used to go by train from our villages to the school. Kantha was a bright student who had joined Jaffna Hindu College on a scholarship from his village school in Maviddupuram. After school hours we returned home also by train. At the waiting hall I used to see this school-boy seated secluded without joining anybody. He preferred isolation and some boys nicknamed him "the solitary reaper." Every day this boy in his teens would smoke cigarette after cigarette and would blow smoke rings in the air. We used to watch but were reluctant to disturb his pensive mood for fear of angering him. Kantha was later a

non-smoker and a teetotaler. Now as a medical man, I begin to wonder whether a foundation for his cardiac illness (which necessitated by-pass surgery later in life) was laid during his schooldays. I was introduced to him by two of his close friends Puvanaseram and Rajaratnam; the former graduated to be a teacher and the latter graduated to be a medical doctor.

Kantha was very good in mathematics and those of us who were not bright would go to him with problems. He used to get annoyed that he had been disturbed. He would continue smoking as if he was unaware of those around and this would annoy those of us who had approached him with hope. In a few minutes he would open his eyes and solve the problem, to our astonishment. We were made to feel small, for what we thought to be a complicated problem had been made so simple.

He was bright in his studies all right, but he shunned company and his acquaintances were very few. He never liked to be in the playing fields. While most of us loved to take part in sports and would be at the soccer and cricket matches to cheer our school teams, Kantha would like to be elsewhere. He loved music and dancing and to be in the theatre. He was a lover of cinema and he would be impatient if he did not see a picture on the first day of release and that

too at the first show. Kantha who shaped his lifestyle on Mahatma Gandhi's example in later life was a lover of entertainment in his youth.

Kantha entered the University of Ceylon to do mathematics and I entered the Faculty of Medicine. Kantha loved Bharatha nathyam and carnatic music and he sought the company of those who were exponents of this art. One who could have been a genius in mathematics if he had disciplined himself had to be satisfied with ending up as an ordinary graduate. He taught mathematics at a girls' school in Kurunegala, and subsequently entered law college. He worked in the chambers of the late Mr. Nadarasa, advocate, and enjoyed a lucrative practice.

After a short lapse, we met again at the Refugee camp at Hindu College, Bambalapitiya, in 1977. Kantha, as he was known, from here on had undergone a 'rebirth. Earlier he had been a person for others and for himself. Now he was no longer concerned about himself. He was a simple and humble person. At this time all of us experienced every human pain and we had to allay our fears by allaying the fears of others. K. C. Nithiyanda, K. Visuvalingam and K. Kanthasamy were among the few immortal names. When I think of these men, I feel

"They are all gone into the world  
of light,

and I alone sit lingering here.  
Their very memory is fair and  
bright

and my sad thoughts doth clear;  
It glows and glitters in my cloudy  
breast

like stars upon some gloomy  
grove."

The Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation (TRRO) was formed. We saw many who lost life and limb. We also saw many more who had lost

their homes and their life's savings. Thousands of these human beings were huddled in refugee camps like cattle. Kantha went around to collect funds to look after these people. Many of the business establishments poured money like water to look after the refugees to make us feel that humaneness had not parted company in toto from human beings. Kantha used to quote from many poets and from the Bagavat Gita to make us feel conscious of our duty. I could remember him quoting Shakespeare: "O judgement thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason."

It was the second time (the first time was in 1958) that the refugees were packed and sent by sea and air to the North and East, merely for them to feel secure. Kantha said that the government of the day had erred by sending these people to places other than those they had cherished as their residences up to the day of the holocaust. The government had not ensured the safety and security of the affected Tamils in places other than in the North and East. This had instilled a feeling in the minds of those who suffered that they should build a separate fort. Thiruvalluvar in **Kural** 741 describes a fort as follows: "A fort is an object of importance to those who march (against their foes) as well as those who through fear (of pursuers) would seek it for shelter."

A refugee camp was established in 1982 when the hill-country Tamils were mercilessly beaten up, relieved of their property and chased out of their residences. Kantha, Viswalingam and Sangaralingam were in the forefront, living in the refugee camps day and night to comfort the suffering. Kantha was very much moved by one incident where a mother and daughter were raped, the daughter within a month of delivering a baby. He took the records of this case only to show to what brutish levels human beings

could descend when racial feelings were roused. It was at this time that people from hill-country areas were either sent to India or settled in Vavuniya, Mannar, or Mullativu district. Kantha left the shores of his motherland in 1983 to become a roving ambassador in foreign climes for the suffering people. His absence at the refugee camp in 1983 was felt by one and all. He was away engaged in a major fund-raising campaign for the affected people till 1987 when he returned and devoted his time to develop projects for the economic emancipation of the people whom he loved and who in return loved him. Up to the day of his disappearance in June, 1988, for a full decade, he did not live for himself but for others.

Some of his great qualities have to be spotlighted. He was never ambitious to hold office anywhere. He never aspired to popularity or political position. He abandoned all selfish desires. Ordinary people like us cannot achieve the confidence he earned from international humanitarian organisations with his sweet speech and cheerful countenance. He practised virtue incessantly in every possible way. Deceit and fraud were never part of his life. He guarded himself against anger and considered everyone his friend. He used to discuss

every matter thoroughly with chosen friends by expressing himself fully. His most lovable quality was that he never stooped low or descended to acts that would bring disgrace to him even when he was threatened with peril. It is said that he preferred death to degradation.

"I cannot make him dead!

His fair sunshining head

Is ever bounding round my study chair.

Yet when my eyes now dim

with tears, I turn to him

The vision vanishes—he is not there!"

"Peace to the dead."

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**Dr. K. Velauthapillai** is a senior lecturer in microbiology, a social worker and Hindu religious activist. When the TRRO ran the refugee camps in Colombo he was on duty at all times of the day and night attending to the sick, wounded and maimed.



**PART TWO**

**BY KANTHASAMY**

**A short selection from  
Kanthasamy's letters and memoranda**

PART TWO

BY KANTHASAMY

Published by the author at  
Kandamangalam, Kottayam

## KANTHASAMY'S LAST MEMORANDUM

On his return to Sri Lanka in January 1988, Kanthasamy travelled and worked extensively in the North and East, visiting existing projects, starting new ones, identifying both problems and priorities for the future, and making plans to alleviate the destruction, misery and despair that he saw everywhere.

After four months of such intensive work, in April, 1988, he wrote the following memorandum identifying matters needing attention. This is Kanthasamy's last substantial memorandum on the relief work of TRRO.

It is typical of the man — systematic, detailed, concise. What Kanthasamy was, how he worked, and the measure of what we have lost by his death is clearly and movingly brought home to us in the bare, matter of fact words of this document.

### TRRO

#### Some Matters Needing Attention

##### 1.0 Accounts

- 1.1. The over expenditure in Medical Programme should be set off from the Diakonia relief allocation.
- 1.2. Fr. James to be written to re remittance of 62,000 pounds (odd), the last instalment of Diakonia. (Fr. has not contacted me yet).

- 1.3 The audit for 31-12-87 to be completed early so that the report for 1987 could be printed early. (A new folder should be designed for printing)
- 1.4. The availability of relief funds should be ascertained before relief payments are made.
- 1.5. After assessing the cash flow the surplus should be placed in appropriate deposits to earn interest.

##### 2.0 PROJECT FORMULATION

- 2.1. Registers: Registers were initiated
  - a. to record all applications with reference numbers.
  - b. to record all applications to NORAD with reference numbers.

Steps should be ensured that all project applications have files with reference numbers (as in registers).

- 2.2. Evaluation: The Project Dept. (i.e. Person in charge of formulating projects) should make the necessary inquiries and obtain the required information. Then there should be an assessment report (in a form designed for that purpose so that the relevant matters are considered) which will be considered by the Evaluation Committee which



should include persons in charge of Project Formulation, Implementation, Secretary, and another member of the Council. The Financial Controller to be invited if his services are required.

Once the Evaluation Committee decides to accept the project then an application is formulated (and entered in the register). Thus an application will leave TRRO office with appropriate reference numbers. It may be convenient to have separate registers and reference numbers for NORAD for whom we are processing applications. All other applications may be in one register with our reference numbers.

- 2.3. Mannar: They are capable of formulating their projects. The assistance required is marginal.
- 2.4. Mullaitivu: They need assistance to identify the requirement and formulation of projects. It is essential that someone competent visits them to discuss the problems. It must be done early so that urgent needs could be identified and support found (say through NORAD) in May.
- 2.5. Kilinochchi: The assistance they need may be less than that of Mullaitivu but all the same they need some prompting. Someone should visit them to discuss the problems and to help them to formulate the projects.

2.6. Vavuniya: Since the area is very large this could conveniently be considered as three units. Since there is no organisation volunteering to look after Vavuniya as a whole it's necessary to consider this in sections. The three units are Chettikulam, Omantai (including Nedunkerni) and Vavuniya Town area.

2.6.1. Chettikulam : Only two bodies are functioning. They are Valvuthayam and Citizen's Committee, but they work as a team. The option is to do relief and rehabilitation work through Valvuthayam. We are extending support for administration. They have carried out preliminary surveys already (the bill annexed should be paid). They are now carrying out a detailed survey. Projects can be formulated for villages from the data. We could raise two or three projects in this area for NORAD in May. Someone should visit them to finalise the projects that could be supported. This area too can be developed like Mannar in a short time. They are likely to receive support directly

2.6.2. OMANTAI. (including Nedunkerni).

Here too the Organisations we identified are Valvuthayam and Citizen's Committee. They are about to join a new body to undertake rehabilitation. We have extended administrative support. Someone should visit them

early to discuss the problems with a view to raising projects for support.

2.6.3. VAVUNIYA TOWN: Arrangements should be made to review the present channel. If the present channel is closed then a new channel is not easy. Lan-kanesan's suggestion is that we could do the work through VRRO (President — Rev. Donald Kanagaratnam) VRRO does not have the machinery now to carry out much work. They are doing some work for FORUT. The problem should be discussed with VRRO with a view to providing the necessary administrative support. It is not clear yet what NORAD meant when it said that they would do the work in Vavuniya through FORUT. I will endeavour to seek the clarification and perhaps meet FORUT. It is unlikely that FORUT will take the initiative to meet the requirements in Vavuniya; the FORUT is likely to expand with a large office site soon. This matter should also be clarified with the G.A.

### 3.0. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION.

3.1. The implementation department should be organised to monitor from the start and all correspondence with the body implementing should be by them. The project monitor for the area should report periodically. There should be a person at the office capable of guiding the work and reporting on the Project.

3.2. Each payment for the project should be made after checking the project and the purpose for which money has been obtained. Any variation, if it is minor should have the approval of the Secretary. If it is considerable then the Project Monitoring Committee should be consulted.

3.3. A Project Monitoring Committee should be set up. It should meet every week to review the progress of the projects.

3.4. The Reporting should be prompt. Facts should be collected right through with a view to reporting on Projects. Steps should also be taken to have photographic records which could also be included in the reports, wherever appropriate.

3.5. The building up of goodwill for generation of support entirely depends on how the projects are implemented and reported on.

### 4.0. PROJECTS FOR 1988.

4.1. FARMERS: Early steps should be taken to assist farmers for the next season starting in September. If we are not ready early we cannot get seed materials at reasonable prices. When the assistance is given late, the best result in the production will not be achieved. Mr. Lan-kenesan thinks that the best assistance in Vavuniya, may be arrangement for cheap ploughings now; though he believes that for small areas we must revert back to animal power

(which will also increase and improve the animal stocks). Mannar is working on a large programme which we can offer to NRC. In other areas we will have to consult them.

4.2. **BOOSSA DETAINEES** and affected youths:

There is no significant effort to raise projects to help them. Only Project is for medical screening and assistance by HHR. Steps should be taken urgently to help this group, to continue education or to have training in some skill or another or to be self employed.

4.3. **WIDOWS AND ORPHANS:**

There is considerable delay in carrying out this programme though money is available or can be found easily. If the data is analysed, we may be able to raise funds for a Village or group of Villages. There should be a crash programme to implement this part of the work. There should be a consultation with HUDEC, RRF, REDD BARNA AND SCF.

4.4. **FISHERMEN:**

In Mannar and in Trincomalee initial steps have been taken to help some villages. Valigamam North is also taking steps. Other areas should be advised to collect the data to formulate projects. We should ensure that the level of assistance is adequate in each area.

4.5. **SELF EMPLOYED PERSONS:**  
There is no immediate plan to help these Groups. The problems are varied due to the variety of activities. But, care should be taken to help them at the same level everywhere.

5.0. **PENDING PROJECTS:**

5.1. **VAVUNIYA, CHEKKADIPULAVU PROJECT:**

The matter should be taken up with G.A. Vavuniya. If we cannot proceed with it arrangements should be made to transfer the allocation elsewhere with the approval of the donors or to return the money. This matter should be attended to without delay and we should write to the donors before they draw our attention.

5.2. **COTTON PROJECT:**

This Project should be reactivated and we should report to the donors, setting out the present position.

5.3. **ORGANISATIONS RECEIVING SUPPORT:**

We should review their work to assess whether the support is serving useful purpose.

23.4.88.



## KANTHASAMY'S ROLE IN THE PUBLICATION OF " SATURDAY REVIEW "

In concluding a letter written on 25th August 1982 to the Editor, **Saturday Review** Kanthasamy observed "Dale Carnegie wrote a lot about how to win friends and influence people. I know the secret to lose friends and make enemies and that is, to **publish an independent paper!**"

Kanthasamy and three of his friends formulated plans for the publication of **Saturday Review** with the primary objective of disseminating correct information on events and developments in Sri Lanka and outside. The weekly paper was meant to analyse events and trends and interpret them against the background in which they occur.

Above all it was aimed to meet the challenge of establishing two-way communication between all peoples and nationalities in the country, and in the process to serve as a vehicle for building healthy and civilised interaction, and as a useful link between Sri Lanka and its people abroad. In particular it would reflect the ethos and life around the area from which it was to be published (ie Jaffna) with authenticity.

Finally, **Saturday Review** was to be an independent non-partisan journal offering its columns for free comment and expression of views within the limits of law and reason.

The first issue of the journal was out on 30th January, 1982, and within seven months provoked a variety of critical comments, particularly from those who were keen to peddle their own pet points of view through the columns of the journal. The observations of Kanthasamy quoted in the opening paragraph have to be considered against this particular background.

**Saturday Review** was one of the several abiding interests of Kanthasamy since early 1981 when the "group of four" first met for a serious and detailed discussion for formulating the project. The memorandum and project proposal finalised by Kanthasamy on 24th May, 1981, is one more example of his clarity of thought and precision of expression. The more salient portions are quoted below:

The first few pages deal with **THE BACKGROUND IN PERSPECTIVE**, towards the end of which Kanthasamy quoted from Tarzie Vittachi's **EMERGENCY '58**. "What are we left with? A nation in ruins, some grim lessons which we cannot afford to forget and a momentous question: Have the Sinhalese and the Tamils reached the parting of the ways?" The document then continues as follows.

## 1.6. PROJECT RATIONALE

1.6.1. It is against this grim backdrop that the idea of publishing an English weekly newspaper in Jaffna is being mooted. It is precisely this backdrop that gives the proposal the sense of urgency as well. In thinking of a Weekly, we have been solely influenced by the question of financial limitation. Anything more ambitious will require resources, financial, material, organisational, that on our present frank assessment would be too unwieldy. What we are looking for is a guaranteed 3 year period during which an English readership has to be built from scratch, advertising has to be attracted, and skilled experienced journalists with a sense of commitment could be persuaded to sacrifice their city income for the sake of an inspiring but risky career in the North. Any project handled skillfully and professionally should gather its own momentum and reach a position and prestige that will help it to stand on its own feet, eventually. This we are confident, we can bring about.

1.6.2 In seeking to publish the weekly in Jaffna we have a very fundamental objective in view. At a time when at a global level there is a loud outcry by the developing countries of the "South" that the existing international information order is controlled by the powerful nations of the "North" and that they cannot communicate even

among themselves except through the Western-controlled communications services, it is hardly realised that a similar problem in miniature exists within the third world countries themselves. For example in little Sri Lanka, the same North-South confrontation exists, with the difference that the direction is reversed. The South controls the information order.

1.6.3. There are no less than 13 daily newspapers published in Sri Lanka in all three languages, and with one solitary exception, they are all published in Colombo in the South. (The exception is "Eelanadu", a Tamil tabloid published in Jaffna in the North) This in effect means that news of happenings in the North or East are sent to the South, where they are filtered, processed, edited, often doctored or distorted, published in the South and sent back to the Northern reader. A perceptive reader in the North could probably see a contradiction in what his own eyes perceive and what the news reports say. While a minority of perceptive readers in the North could at least be in a position to question their credibility, the bulk of the readership in the rest of the island, the majority of whom are Sinhalese, tend to accept the printed word. This process has been going on for the past twenty five years. In some small way, through the columns of our weekly, we hope to reverse the flow of information and thereby correct the present information imbalance.

1.6.4. We have considered the need for this paper, based on the following imperatives:

- a) To build a healthy and civilised inter-action between the majority Sinhala community and the Tamil minority by reaching the influential English-reading middle class and the elite in both communities; to offer a forum to ventilate the hopes, aspirations and fears of each other. This the country's mass media has failed to do. What is worse, they had often lent their columns during times of racial tensions to expressions of extreme, hysterical thought - process on the part of members and leaders of the majority community.
- b) To reach out to the Sinhala decision-makers and opinion leaders who despite 25 years of the chauvinistic cry of Sinhala Only are still largely English - language oriented. The kind of feedback available to them about popular Tamil reactions on vital issues is a mediated feedback, based on jaundiced reports in the mass media, Police Criminal Investigation Department reports and Tamil sycophants' version etc. The proposed weekly could help in conveying authentic Tamil opinion — direct to the decision makers.

- c) The journal will reflect the Tamil ethos, comment authoritatively on aspects of Tamil culture, interpret them for non-Tamil readerships, and thereby help to overcome barriers of prejudices and emotional antipathies allowed to accumulate over the years.
- d) The paper will not hesitate to stand up against injustice, acts of discrimination, race prejudices, and violations of human rights and freedoms, but in doing so, it will speak in the language of logic and reason and not emotionalism.
- e) Finally, despite its inherent limitations of a weekly, it will offer itself as a model for the mass media, in restoring journalistic standards and ethics both in reportage and comment — a major casualty in Sri Lanka journalism in recent years.

1.6.5. It is intended that the proposed weekly will reach out to three identifiable segments of readership;

- 1) The English-reading public of both the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic groups in the country;
- 2) The Sri Lanka Tamil expatriates who are scattered in various parts of the world doing financially well but but starved of news and interpretative comment from home;



3) International opinion leaders and interested individuals in the field of Media and Race Relations.

1.6.6. This is not intended to be a polemical, paper, nor a partisan one. It will be a forum for all opinions so far as they concern Tamil rights and race relations in this country, but yet not parochial in content. It will sift news from the rest of the world inform readers of relevant developments outside and inter-

pret them from the standpoint of our own fundamental interests. While the style of journalist will be individualistic, the approach will be liberal and catholic.

(Kanthasamy thereafter proceeds to set out the proposal and the details of staff, office and equipment, organisation, printing, distribution etc. working out to the last hundred rupees the costs involved and the likely loss for the first three years at the end of which a balance was expected to be struck to run without loss).



# amnesty international

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79/15, Alexandra Place,  
Colombo 7

SRI LANKA

Telephone 95197.

26th July, 1978.

President Sekou Toure,  
President of Guinea,  
Conakry,  
Guinea.

Dear Mr. President,

### VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

We belong to Sri Lanka which gained its independence in 1948 and is one of the developing countries in Asia. We are in the same position as your country. Our development is guided by the respect we have for the fellow human being and the Human Rights we are permitted to enjoy.

It is with deep concern that we write this letter to you. We are informed that there are large number of political prisoners in your country without trial.

Your Government has been using special summary Courts for the trial of political prisoners who were not afforded adequate opportunity of defending themselves. Further, "confessions" extracted under torture were placed before the Courts to find them guilty. These actions are no doubt violations of Human Rights.

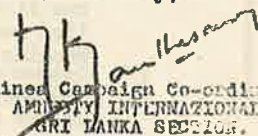
We also note with sorrow that the conditions under which the prisoners are kept do not accord with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. We are informed that the cells are over-crowded, the supply of water and food poor, hygiene and sanitation are grossly inadequate and visitors are not permitted to see the prisoners. The prisoners are therefore in poor health.

We enclose herewith 81 petitions signed by over 1,500 persons belonging to all walks of life in our country. You would particularly note that petitions No.4, 19, 32, 41, 50 and 51 are by lawyers in groups, petition No.36 by University lecturers of one of the Universities in Sri Lanka, petition No.68 by Doctors in a Township, petition No.67 by teachers and petition No.75 is by students of Universities of Sri Lanka. You will also note that petition Nos.34, 42 and 43 are by persons from different occupations.

We hope and pray that our sympathy and consideration for these prisoners would induce your Government to treat them with kindness and try them under normal laws, if there are any charges, or release them to enjoy the freedoms every human being is entitled to.

Thanking you,

Yours truly,

  
Guinea Campaign Co-ordinator  
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
SRI LANKA SECTION.

# TAMIL REFUGEES REHABILITATION ORGANISATION

17, FRANCIS ROAD, COLOMBO 4. Tel: 43201

19th September, 1979

## Patrons:

S. ANBALAVANAR  
 V. BALASUBRAMANIAM  
 V. BALASUBRAMANIAM  
 N. C. BRATT  
 A. Y. S. GNANAM  
 LAL. HINDARAMANI  
 K. GUNARATNAM  
 DR. A. KANAGASATHAN  
 MR. C. KANAGASUBRAMANIAM  
 MUMI KUNDANMAL  
 C. LOGANATHAN  
 V. MANICKAVASAGAM  
 K. P. MOODY  
 R. A. MADHAN  
 R. NAGESHVARAN  
 P. NAVARATNAM, Q. C.  
 MR. S. M. NAVARATNAM  
 R. NARAYANASAMY  
 T. NESTHARAJAN  
 A. K. NEEBATNAM  
 C. RANGANATHAN, Q. C.  
 MR. R. SARANAYAGAM  
 S. SELLAMUTTU  
 E. SHANMUGAM  
 S. SINGATHANAI  
 S. SVASUBRAMANIAM  
 K. C. THIRUKARASAM  
 V. THIRUNAVUKARASAM  
 LADY VAIHINATHAN  
 M. G. WESTERLAUS

## President:

K. C. NITHYANANTHA

## Joint Secretaries:

K. KANTHASAMY  
 K. MADHARAN

## Joint Treasurers:

V. S. THIRUKARASAM  
 R. YOGARASAM

His Excellency J.R. Jayewardene,  
 President,  
 Colombo.

Your Excellency,

## VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

On 14th August, 1979 the army and the police raided "Dellar Farm", a refugee settlement in Nedunkerni in the Vavuniya District, and took into custody U. Pararajasekaram (alias Baby), T. Udayakumar and Raji. Baby was the volunteer in charge of the Dellar Farm. He was also assisting in Kent Farm, another refugee settlement. Udayakumar was a volunteer assisting Baby and Mrs. Udayakumar was a teacher assisting the work in the settlement. Raji was one of the refugees who has settled down in the Dellar Farm.

2. Thayaparasingham, who was a volunteer in charge of the Kent Farm, was also arrested on the 15th while he was at his home in Jaffna. A person named Kandasamy, a refugee settled down in Kent Farm, was also taken into custody.

3. The volunteers and refugees were interrogated in the Residency in Jaffna. It has been brought to our notice that they were subjected to some or all of the forms of torture set down below

- (a) Detenu was stripped naked and assaulted by two or three officials both with hands and sticks.
- (b) Detenu stripped naked and made to lie face downwards and two officers sat on hands and legs while two others assaulted with batons on the back.
- (c) Detenu was forced to urinate and then chilli was applied to the penis which caused tremendous pain and suffering.
- (d) Chilli was applied to the nose.
- (e) Detenu was tied by the genitals and a rope was circled round the neck and the rope was tied over his so that he was held in a hanging position with constant and severe pain. Detenu was hung upside down by the ankles and chilli and salt were burnt under the head of the detenu so that he may be suffocated.

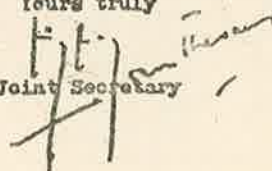
(c)



(g) Detenu was handcuffed on to the hood of a truck and was left in that position right through the night, and in the morning when the truck was to be washed, he was chained on to the nearest lamp post.

4. They were also subject to various forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
5. We are also informed that several others who were taken into custody have been subject to similar torture or cruel or inhuman treatment by the interrogators or their associates in the Residency.
6. The conditions under which they are kept while they are not being interrogated, in certain police stations in Jaffna are unhealthy and inhuman.
7. Baby was taken to the Dollar Farm on the morning of the 16th and he was seen with plaster on his head and fresh blood on his cheek and shirt. It is believed that the injury on the head was sustained while an unsuccessful attempt was made to hang him by the toes. Baby was taken back and is yet in custody.
8. We are not setting out here in detail the torture that was meted out to individual persons which have been brought to our notice. We fear the safety of the persons who are in custody yet.
9. The persons who have been sent out after torture are warned that if they do reveal the nature of the treatment they will not live to tell the tale.
10. The security personnel visited the Dollar Farm again on the 5th or 6th of this month. Some of the security personnel have abused the Catholic Sisters who are helping the refugees and on one occasion it was even alleged by the security personnel that the Rev. Sisters would not hesitate to swear falsely on the crucifix.
11. It is with great regret and sorrow that we bring the above facts to Your Excellency's notice in the hope Your Excellency would take appropriate action to safeguard the human rights to which every person in this country is entitled. We also hope that Your Excellency will take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the persons who are in custody or who are likely to be taken into custody.

Yours truly

  
Joint Secretary

## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Kanthasamy's firm dedication to the principles of a free press is reflected in the following extract from a letter written by him from London on 1st November, 1986.

"I quite appreciate your enthusiasm regarding the resolution of the ethnic conflict but SR should remain within the domain of free press. SR should not be allowed to descend into the arena. If it does so, it is likely to be hurt; moreover its credibility will be at stake. Any mission bordering on politics should not be part of the work of SR. I believe that its function is that of a free press which would be in Jaffna, reflect the problems of the Tamil people. It is also expected to lend its voice against any human rights violations in the country.

When we expand into a Tamil Weekly and perhaps an English daily it is absolutely essential that we remain an independent press speaking

out openly and boldly against injustice. If we are seen to be advocating a partisan cause we not only invite disrepute but perhaps we will attract danger. Our contribution.....!through SR to the resolution of the conflict is by maintaining a free press and nothing more.

I have recently received a set of documents consisting of an unpublished article by Peoples Forum (sent to the editor SR) and two letters of protest to the editor, SR. The right to publish or not is yours. But I notice a certain disappointment in the writers that a contrary view or view not acceptable to the editor has not found a place in a free press. This is regrettable. We should take extreme care to preserve the freedom of the press which is achieved more by publishing conflicting views rather than suppressing any."

## **PART THREE**

# **THE ABDUCTION**

**Documents relating to events preceding and  
following Kanthasamy's abduction  
on 19 June 1988**



PART THREE

THE ABOLITION

... ..  
... ..  
... ..

**SURIYA WICKREMASINGHE**

B.A., LL. B.

BARRISTER, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

31, Charles Place

Colombo 3

Sri Lanka

Tel.

574899

29 July 1988

LETTER SENT TO A NUMBER OF  
PERSONS AND INSTITUTIONS WHO  
KNEW KANTHASAMY AND HIS WORK

K.Kanthasamy

I have known K. Kanthasamy for well over 25 years, during which period we have worked together both as professional colleagues and in the human rights field. He is also a close personal friend.

In early June, shortly before his abduction, Kanthasamy entrusted two documents to me. They are entitled MEETINGS WITH EROS (dated 3rd June 1988) and T.R.R.O.- THE PRESENT PROBLEM (dated 31 May 1988). From our talk it was clear that he gave them to me not merely for my information but also for purposes of record, anticipating the threat to himself; this is borne out by his subsequent note to me from Trinco. He told me he had not shown the documents to anyone else in Sri Lanka, but indicated he was sending copies abroad, presumably as an added precaution.

Immediately on hearing of Kanthasamy's abduction, which took place in Jaffna on 19 June 1988, I re-examined the two documents. It is clear that MEETINGS WITH EROS was concerned to record a specific external threat, whereas T.R.R.O. - THE PRESENT PROBLEM deals with internal affairs of that organisation. I immediately gave copies of MEETINGS WITH EROS to all persons engaged in various initiatives to seek Kantha's whereabouts and secure his release. I was more circumspect with the other document, fearing that it might cause a diversion into irrelevant discussions and recriminations when the need of the hour was to concentrate all mental energies on seeking the best way to save Kanthasamy in an extremely difficult situation.

Telex: 21727 or 21605 TX BURO CE ATTN 312 SURIDES

Now, well over a month has passed, and there remains no clear indication of Kanthasamy's fate. Together with a few others I am collecting and collating the various information that comes in.

Meanwhile, I must decide what else Kanthasamy would wish done with these documents. I have now decided on a (still limited) circulation of the second document as well. I have given it to T.R.R.O. Council Members with whom I have had contact. I have also decided to send both documents to persons and institutions which had a close working relationship with T.R.R.O., and/or with Kanthasamy in his relief and human rights work. Hence, this letter to you.

Please, use your discretion in the use you make of these documents. I do not think Kanthasamy would want them publicised indiscriminately and in their entirety, in particular the one dealing with internal affairs of T.R.R.O.

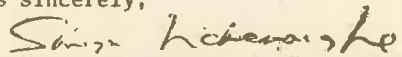
It may very well be that there is nothing new to you in these papers, as there has already been considerable circulation from the point abroad to which Kantha had sent copies, and the appeal of the Central British Fund for Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation is clearly based on both. However I felt it my obligation to do a separate distribution of my own to all those legitimately concerned about this affair, to ensure you have the full and authentic texts together with the account of how they came to me.

Later, perhaps, I will send you a note summarising the results of our information collecting so far. We have decided we have to continue to consider that Kanthasamy is alive until we have clear evidence to the contrary. In this situation every move still has to be scrutinised carefully for any potential danger to Kantha.

Please feel free to contact me at the above address for any clarification.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Suriya Wickremasinghe



KANTHASAMY's DOCUMENTS

explanatory note

The two documents were shown to me by Kanthasamy on the last occasion when I met him. That was in Colombo, around 3 or 4 June 1988. He wanted me to keep both, but found he did not have a spare copy of the document MEETINGS WITH EROS. So he said he would give me one later. He left Colombo without doing so, but sent me a copy by post with a covering note (reproduced below) written in Trincomalee on 14 June 1988. Kanthasamy had travelled to Jaffna on the following day, June 15, and was abducted in Jaffna town four days later on the morning of Sunday 19 June 1988.

*Suriya Wickremasinghe*

Suriya Wickremasinghe

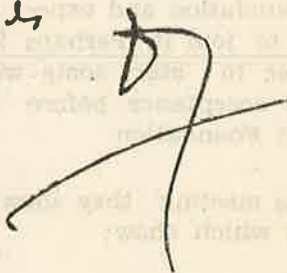
DOCUMENTS ANNEXED

- (1) Note from Kanthasamy to Suriya dated 14 June 1988
- (2) MEETINGS WITH EROS (dated 3 June 1988)
- (3) T.R.R.O. - THE PRESENT PROBLEM (dated 31 May 1988).

*Suriya*

*Trinco  
14-6-88*

*The copy of the document for  
your records - regards*



3rd June 1988.

## MEETINGS WITH EROS

1. By prior arrangement a representative of EROS (the person who attended Thimpu) met with me on 20/2/1988 to discuss rehabilitation work. There was a cordial discussion and I explained to him how TRRO and other NGOs could work. The meeting ended without any plan for any follow up.

2. I was in Trincomalee from 24th February. A representative of EROS contacted me to invite me for a meeting with TDDF (Trincomalee District Development Foundation) which was formed by EROS, presumably for the purpose of bringing all the bodies under their umbrella. At the meeting I expressed two points on TDDF. They are, viz:

- (i) If it is intended to reach to funds of donor agencies any connection with any militant group, or political party, is a detriment;
- (ii) It is not possible to announce a Foundation and expect everyone to join it. Perhaps it is better to start some work to gain acceptance before forming a Foundation.

At the meeting they showed me documents which show:

- (a) That TDDF was initiated by an EROS connected body;

- (b) That many organisations functioning in Trincomalee had agreed to become members at the inaugural meeting (I later learned EHED, branch of SEDEC declined to take part at the inaugural meeting).

Some of the persons who attended the inaugural meeting and even agreed to hold office, thought otherwise on reflection. It is possible that a fair number would dissociate with TDDF. It is quite possible that TDDF might have thought that I had dissuaded some of them from continuing with TDDF. But it is not true. Even before some of the organisations met me they had begun to have doubts about TDDF and its role, or ambition. In Trincomalee there was already an NGO Co-ordinating Committee functioning and a duplication was superfluous.

3. Following the suggestion of Bishop Kingsley Swampillai that it is desirable to have Co-ordinating Committees of NGOs in each district (successful units were functioning in Batticaloa and Trincomalee) a memorandum was circulated by me on behalf of TRRO. A copy of this memorandum was also circulated to all members of the Rehabilitation Data Centre (RDC) (which emerged at a meeting

of those NGOS concerned with widows). There was considerable enthusiasm to convert RDC into Jaffna Rehabilitation Consortium which would be the Co-ordinating Committee of the NGOs in Jaffna. A copy of the memorandum has reached EROS who were very disturbed by these efforts. The reason for such reaction is not clear and one can only hazard a guess.

4. On the 29th (or 30th) March I returned to Jaffna from Colombo, and when I was in the office of TRRO in the afternoon, a representative of EROS (whose name later I learnt as Ravi) wanted an appointment to meet me, and I suggested 6 p.m. on Saturday (2/4/88), but he was insisting that they should meet me the same day. I told him that I have just come, and I wished to sort out my work at TRRO, and said that Saturday would be convenient and leisurely. He was dissatisfied, and went away. In the evening by about 6 p.m. three people (whose names I learnt only on the following day) came and said that they were from EROS and wanted to meet me. I told them the meeting is arranged for Saturday and that I would like to leave it at that. They said the meeting was urgent, and it must be held before the 4th of April. Then I said that I will try to finish my morning's work the following day, and I would meet them at 11 a.m. Then they said

that I cannot trifle with an Organisation like EROS, etc and that they would send me a van the following morning at 11 a.m. and that I should come to their office.

5. However, the following morning the three of them (Ravi, Vasanthan and Andrew Joseph) came at 11.30 a.m. and there was no suggestion that I should go to their office. The discussion was centred round the memorandum circulated by TRRO under my signature. They said that they would disrupt any rehabilitation work not in conformity with their policy, and no work will be tolerated except with their permission (as an afterthought they added 'with the permission of LTTE'). When I asked them what their policy was, they said they cannot announce it, but permission should be obtained case by case. They also reminded me that Kathiramalai was killed because he acted against the policy of EROS, and that could be the fate of others as well. The meeting was not as rough as it was the previous day, but was possibly intended to be intimidatory. I later learnt in Trincomalee that it was a "warning".

6. So far there has been no further attempt to meet me again, but there were meetings with officials of the TRRO.



## NOTE

**T. R. R. O. — THE PRESENT PROBLEM**

1. Steps were taken by me on behalf of TRRO at the suggestion of Bishop Kingsley Swampillai to form Co-ordinating Committees of NGOs in each district with a view to arranging consultations on the rehabilitation work in the North and the East. A Rehabilitation Data Centre (RDC) emerged independently in the Jaffna District and there was enthusiasm to convert RDC into Jaffna Rehabilitation Consortium (JRC). A memorandum was sent by TRRO at the suggestion of the Bishop to organisations likely to co-ordinate the work in the different districts. The organisations in the district were also personally contacted by me and it was found that the suggestion to arrange for a "NORTH-EAST PROVINCE CONSULTATION" (NEPCO) on rehabilitation was very well received.

2. A copy of the memorandum reached the hands of EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organisers) and three of them (Ravi, Vasanthan and Andrew Joseph) met me on 31st March, 1988 to discuss my efforts in co-ordination and my relationship with TRRO. The messages from them were that:

- (a) No rehabilitation work can be done which does not comply with their "policy";
- (b) anyone who attempts to do work should remember what happened to "Kathiramalai" of

Sarvodaya (who was shot by EROS).

The meeting was at times intimidating, and their meeting (which I learnt later) was a "warning". (Representatives of EROS have met me on 20/2/1988, in Jaffna, and on 28th and 29th in Trincomalee to discuss rehabilitation work).

3. When RDC met on 4/4/1988, for the purpose of converting RDC into JRC most of the members were not enthusiastic of the programme. It emerged at the meeting that most of the members were met by representatives of EROS. Prof K. Sivathamby, Chairman of TRRO, who attended the meeting, was also not keen to proceed with the JRC, perhaps for another reason which was not mentioned at the meeting. He would appear to consider that the formation of JRC would erode into the position of TRRO as N—E body and that JRC would grant credibility to many undesirable organisations. However, the meeting on the 4th ended with dampened enthusiasm and a half-hearted agreement to carry on with RDC. Prof Sivathamby, Chairman of TRRO, was not keen to take part in the consultation. The arrangements for the consultation as scheduled (for 7th and 8th May) were proceeded with, and EHRD of Trincomalee, branch of SEDEC in Batticaloa and Trincomalee, convened the meeting.

4. Representatives of E R O S (mainly Ravi) had met Aravinthan (Secretary and Councillor of TRRO Ltd.) on two occasions prior to 5th May, to discuss my role in TRRO. Aravinthan had explained that I am a founder member, but not a councillor now, and I continue to assist TRRO in its work. The same point was raised with me when they met me on 31st March. EROS would appear to be of a mistaken belief that I am TRRO and even suggested to directing me that I appointed Prof. Sivathamby (which is not true). On 5th May, EROS had met Aravinthan again and referred to the NEPCO meeting in Trincomalee on 7th. and 8th. May, and wanted him to issue a statement that I have nothing to do with TRRO. Aravinthan had told them that he had no authority to do so. There would appear to be considerable anxiety by the attitude displayed by the representatives of EROS.

5. Aravinthan had conveyed what had taken place to Prof. Sivathamby, who along with Aravinthan had met Balakumar, the leader of EROS, on 9th May. According to Prof. Sivathamby, the meeting was very rough and Balakumar has refused to discuss any matter relating to me and only wanted to know about the relationship of TRRO with me, and wanted a declaration that TRRO has nothing to do with me. Prof. Sivathamby had requested for time until 15th May, to clarify the position. (I was expected to return on 11th. May).

6. I was able to return at 8 a.m. on 12th morning, breaking journey at Kilinochchi, since there was no direct bus from Trincomalee on 11th. On my arrival, I informed Aravinthan

that I had returned. The Public Relations Officer came to my residence within minutes to convey the request of Prof. Sivathamby that I should stay in-doors until he met me at 2 p.m. Around 10 a.m. Prof. Sivathamby also, while on his way to the University, met me to repeat the same request.

7. At about 3.30 p.m. Prof. Sivathamby, Mr. Nallathamby (Vice Chairman), Mr. Ramanathan, Councillor and Aravinthan came to see me. The details of the EROS meetings were repeated. Prof. Sivathamby did most of the talking, and said that had he been in a position to contact me he would have advised me not to come to Jaffna. Then I was requested to leave Jaffna to Colombo, and lie low until the problem passes over. He feared that EROS would harm me (what it means is that they would shoot me) Where Aravinthan was present or the meeting of EROS was with Aravinthan, he was requested to narrate his experience. I told them that I have no intention of running away, and I propose to carry on, and that Prof. Sivathamby and others need not worry about my safety. Then I asked what TRRO wants in this situation. Then Prof. Sivathamby said that I should keep away from the office. (It would appear later that this request was not discussed with others earlier). I told him that it is not a problem, but I wished to make one request. It was that TRRO should expeditiously report on all projects in which Fr. James or I had any connection as we always considered it our personal obligation to ensure that the projects were properly carried out and reported on with proper accounts. Prof. Sivathamby agreed to it. Then the question of

Mannar project was raised, and he wanted me to carry on with it. I told them that it would not be correct, and I wanted to be relieved fully. I also told them that I would go to Colombo to meet with Mr. Nils Sivertsen on 19th or so, to explain my position. There was a further request that I should carry on with it. Then I agreed since I was not confident that anyone in TRRO knew much about the project, and I did not want the project to be affected in any way.

8. On 13th morning I listed the projects which needed attention, as far as I could remember, and returned all papers in my possession. Prof. Sivathamby met me to say that I should not take a hasty decision on this matter and the TRRO will be affected by it. I told him that I do not think TRRO should succumb to such interference. If we cannot carry on as a free organisation, we should close it down. I also told him that I have many things to do and I may not have the time to come back even if TRRO thinks it fit to invite me at a later time. Though Prof. Sivathamby and Aravinthan promised to meet me on the 14th they could not do so since they had to attend a funeral.

9. On the 16th afternoon, Prof. Sivathamby, Mr. Nallathamby and Aravinthan met me. The main concern would appear to be the Mannar Project. They wanted me to take Aravinthan along with me to Mannar which I said is not possible at present. However, I agreed to their suggestion that Aravinthan should come to Colombo to meet Mr. Nils Sivertsen of NRC. I also told them that I would discuss the developments at TRRO

with Mr. Sivertsen (Prof. was not very happy about it), I also told him that when I meet NORAD, I will do the same. When he said that it is not wise to do so. I told him that we had worked in this field for nearly 12 years, and it has always been on the basis that the donors knew every problem, and I am not willing to act on any basis other than the truth. I have also told them that I would advise Mr. Sivertsen not to visit Jaffna as the time is not appropriate.

10. On 21st May, the matter was again discussed with Prof. at Colombo at the home of Mr. Kanapathipillai (founder member and councillor). Mr. Kanapathipillai was of the view that we should not accept such dictation by anybody, and that Prof. and the others concerned should withdraw any prohibition on my work. Mr. Kanapathipillai said that "Rapport" does not mean mere acceptance of orders, and that Prof. Sivathamby should have discussed the matter with EROS. Prof. said that at the second meeting with Balakumar (which took place between 12th, and 20th, May), they would appear to have calmed down and that they had no objection to the Mannar Project. Prof. Sivathamby also said that his services are not available after the end of June. However, he does not want to leave now as it is a challenge to him as well. On 22nd. May Mr. Kanapathipillai and I met Dr. Velauthapillai to apprise him of the development. Dr. Velauthapillai too agreed with the views of Mr. Kanapathipillai.

.....  
(K. Kanthasamy)

Mannar, 31st. May, 1988.

Statement by V. Kanapathipillai.

I wish to state that the discussions that took place in my presence are correctly reflected in the above memorandum.



# EELAM REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION EROS

39, Temple Road,  
Jaffna,  
1988.07.03

## Press Release

### KANDASAMY SHOULD BE SET FREE IMMEDIATELY

It has been our observation that the freedom struggle of the Tamil-speaking people, with its immense sacrifices, has also been beset with mysterious incidents from time to time. The news of such an occurrence, wherein Mr. Kandasamy has disappeared ever since Sunday, the 19th, of June, 1988 is enough to shock the sensibilities of most people. Mr. Kandasamy a stalwart of the T.R.R.O. has been well known to us ever since he made our acquaintance on the 1st August, 1977, through his organization. At that time he was instrumental in our winning whole-hearted support for establishing our model farm at Kannati, thus contributing to the growth of our Organization. He laboured unceasingly to reveal to the world at large the incessant miseries inflicted on Tamil-speaking people, apart from fighting for their human rights and other benefits. We are well aware of the munificence characterising his actions. There was no animosity generated between us on the occasions we disagreed, and it is a well

known fact that we always endeavoured to resolve our differences through dialogue. However, we are aware that false allegations of our Organization being responsible for Mr. Kandasamy's disappearances are now being levelled against our Organization. Similarly, a few weeks ago, the story that our Organization was responsible for the goings-on at the Jaffna University was being disseminated.

Such insidious information being circulated about our Organisation, in spite of our categorical disavowals, only prompts us to exercise a measure of surveillance, in the future, to counter vicious and deliberate falsehoods against us by forces inimical to our Organisation. We earnestly appeal that, irrespective of those are responsible for his disappearance and irrespective of the reasons thereof, Mr. Kanthasamy be set free immediately.

Sgd.

03-07-88

On behalf of General Command.

## “KANTHASAMY CANNOT BE SEEN ANY MORE”

So states the Pasarai Movement in its statement.

“The disappearance of Mr. Kanthasamy of the TRRO is only a starting point in our action to eliminate the destructive elements which have penetrated into all spheres of the society. We like to inform those who are looking for Mr. Kanthasamy that he cannot be found at any time in this birth”.

A statement issued yesterday in the name of the political affairs committee of the Tamil Eelam Pasarai Movement says so.

In the concluding portion of the statement it is further said “We did not wish to reveal our identity. In the critical situation of today it is difficult and impractical to reveal our identity. Hence, even when we

intervened in the affairs of the University Administration to establish order, we were not prepared to reveal our identity.

But after the disappearance of Mr. Kanthasamy we have been made to feel that some persons have attempted to obstruct our activities. In this critical situation we are compelled to reveal our identity even in a limited way.”

---

The above is a translation of a news item appearing in the Jaffna daily MURASOLI of 12 July, 1988.

The so-called Tamil Eelam Pasarai Movement is a group the existence of which cannot be traced.

## THE REFUGEES REHABILITATION ORGANISATION

106, 4th Cross Street,  
Jaffna,  
Sri Lanka

TRRO is shocked at the kidnaping of Mr. Kanthasamy who as one of the founder member of the Organisation and a director of CBFTRR, the organisation that raises funds for TRRO has been the live-wire of relief and rehabilitation work in the North and East.

Mr. Kanthasamy returned to Sri Lanka in January, 1988, and was working on relief and rehabilitation programmes with and through TRRO. At TRRO he was assisting the officials to take over the responsibility of being in direct touch with the donor agencies as the CBFTRR was winding up its work. He visited all the important towns in North and East regarding the problems of relief and rehabilitation and co-ordinating those. Busy as he was with work in the other organisations like the New Era Publications, Home for Human Rights and Deepam Institute, he guided TRRO to equip itself to face the increasing challenges of refugee rehabilitation. When it was known that one of the militant groups has had discussions with him regarding his work, the officials of TRRO contacted concerned persons and impressed upon them the need and the indispensibility of Mr. Kanthasamy's services (May 7-16). Mr. Kanthasamy was apprised of the discussions.

The news of the abduction of Mr. Kanthasamy was conveyed by a message to the Secretary TRRO by Rev. Sister Rita by about 4.15 p.m. on that day (June 19). It was learnt later on that the abduction had taken place around 6.45/7.00 a.m. that morning. The Secretary contacted the Chairman, who lives about 30 kms away from Jaffna, around 6.30 p.m. and the Chairman rushed to Jaffna. That night before curfew time (9 p.m.) the Chairman and the Secretary contacted leading political personalities in the Jaffna Town about the whereabouts of Mr. Kanthasamy.

On the 20th TRRO officials met religious dignitaries, fellow social workers and influential people regarding this.

From the 20th onwards the members of the governing council of TRRO were in constant touch with each other. Collectively and individually efforts were made to contact persons who could help knowing about the whereabouts of Mr. Kanthasamy and assist in getting him released. The Chairman cancelled his trip to Colombo (22/6 and 23/6) to be in Jaffna to be in touch with the various persons engaged in knowing the whereabouts of Mr. Kanthasamy and obtaining his release. The Secretary went to Colombo and contacted Mr. Kanapathipillai, one of the Governors. The secre-



tary returned from Colombo on 24/6.

With hectic efforts being taken at all levels during the first week, it was the consensus of opinion of those engaged in this work, that it would not be discreet to issue any public statement, even though it was known that the BBC and the regional news of AIR had referred to the abduction of Mr. Kanthasamy. It was thought that issuing a statement at that stage could only be counter-productive.

TRRO's statement issued on 28/6 referred to the greatness of Mr. Kanthasamy's services for the Tamils, the international implications of the abduction and implored for his release.

TRRO has been in touch with various persons from the Jaffna Town and the villages to find out about the whereabouts of Mr. Kanthasamy.

The Board of Governors had several formal and informal meetings to discuss matters relating to the release and has been taking all necessary actions in this regard. It has been co-ordinating its efforts with others who were engaged in knowing the whereabouts of Mr. Kanthasamy.

The Chairman went to Colombo on 5th July to contact donor agencies and other institutions to apprise them of the situation. Cables and telexes were sent to the funding agencies and CBF was also contacted.

On July 12th a news item has appeared in the Murasoli, a local daily, that an organisation called the Tamileela Paasarai Iyakkam (Movement of the Tamil Eelam Fighters' Camp) that "those who are now searching for Mr. Kanthasamy cannot see him in this birth". It is understood that the news item is a shortened version of a long statement which had been delivered at the Security post of that newspaper office.

TRRO is continuing its efforts, with the assistance of all those interested, to know what exactly happened and is happening.

TRRO considers it as its primary duty in this hour of its greatest crisis to carry on its work of relief and rehabilitation.

**Board of Governors.**  
**K. Sivathamby,**  
**Chairman.**

Jaffna.  
18th July, 1988.

## STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN TRRO

1. In view of the document "TRRO — the present position" dated 31st May 1988 signed by Mr. Kanthasamy it has become essential for me to place on record the events preceding Mr. Kanthasamy's abduction, in which I had come in as Chairman, TRRO.

2. a) I accepted the Chairmanship of TRRO in July 1986 on the unanimous request of the Board of Governors of TRRO and its well-wishers after the sudden demise of Mr. Visuvaligam, on the assumption that I would be there only for a short period.

This work was offered to me because of the work I had done in the Citizens' Committee Movement.

b) After working for just more than an year, I left for Madras on a six-month assignment as Visiting Professor at the University of Madras. The Board of Governors even then wanted me to continue the Chairmanship.

c) I have had contacts with Mr. Kanthasamy and twice I have met him in London over TRRO work. The CBF for TRR and Kantha knew all about what TRRO was doing, and how it was co-ordinating its work within North and East through local organisations.

d) Mr. Kanthasamy on his return from England, first came to Madras, where I have had discussions with him about TRRO work. While in Madras he told me that on his return to Sri Lanka he wished to take up residence at Trincomalee. I advised him against taking permanent residence at Trinco at that time and urged him to have Jaffna as the base and co-ordinate his work from there and that it would help TRRO also to do its work effectively.

He returned to Sri Lanka in January 1988 and was doing his work with Jaffna as base.

e) I returned to Sri Lanka in late March 1988 and resumed work at TRRO only in the first week of April.

f) Since my return I had invited Kantha to attend the meetings of the Board of Governors of TRRO. In fact at the first meeting after my return, I requested that I be relieved of the responsibility and that Kantha should take over. He said that in view of his health and the commitments he has, things should continue in the existing manner at least for some time.

3. In view of all these, I had requested Kantha to guide TRRO to make it more effective in its functioning especially when he and CBF wanted us to be in direct touch with the donor agencies (CBF was in touch with the donor agencies and made the remittances to TRRO).

Kantha gave me a document "TRRO — some matters needing attention" dated 23-4-88. In that Kantha has referred to how TRRO should organise its work in Mannar, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Cheddikulam, Omantai and Vavuniya Town.

I wish to state categorically that there was no difference of opinion regarding the working of TRRO.

4. I came to know about the formation of the NEPCO only after my arrival in Jaffna, and in the very first meeting I attended I found there were serious disagreements between the Convenors and the Co-ordinating Committee of the Citizens Committees and the Red Cross about the composition of the Jaffna Rehabilitation Consortium (JRC). There was a long discussion and I suggested an associate membership for some organisations. I was not enthusiastic about the JRC because when we form a Consortium we had to bring in all the organisations irrespective of the amount and extent of work they do. There are many letter-head organisations. Once earlier CBF had to contact TRRO to find out about an organisation which called itself a Consortium.

In this connection it is important to emphasise two points:—

- a) NEPCO was no parallel organisation to TRRO, for the former is only a consultative body which would not engage itself in relief work.
- b) Secretary TRRO is Secretary Jaffna Data Base Centre.

I did not want to take part in the NEPCO meetings because I felt that, at a time when I was trying to divest myself from the responsibilities at TRRO, I should not get committed to any work that arises out of my work at TRRO. I do not have the time for it.

5. I came to know about the problems Kantha had with EROS only much later by the end of April. When Mr. Aravinthan (A) the Secretary of TRRO, informed me of the need to clarify to EROS the role of Kantha in TRRO, I along with the Secretary met Mr. Balakumar and explained to him how Kantha has come down to help enable TRRO to deal directly with the donor agencies as the CBF (Central British Fund) was winding up its work. We emphasized the importance of Kantha's services.
6. The action taken to advise Kantha to keep a low profile was decided upon after the Vice-Chairman (Mr. Nallathamby), Mr. Aravinthan and Mr. Ramanathan and myself discussed the situation. We went jointly and told him. We wanted him to keep a low profile until such time the problem passes over. We wanted him to avoid



being in Jaffna for some time. As the Vice-Chairman and I later explained in a letter (20-6-88) to Mr. Kanapathipillai, a Counsellor of TRRO resident in Colombo, in the wake of increasing misunderstandings we requested Mr. Kanthasamy to lie low for some time and it was done (with the best of intentions, and in the genuine interests of Mr. Kanthasamy and TRRO.

7. It should be mentioned at this stage that on my arrival from Madras, I requested Kantha to join me to meet the Colombo based donor agencies with which as Chairman TRRO I had established contact. Thus we went together to NORAD and Diakonia.
8. In fact, when around 18-19-5 when at Norad the question of how we are dividing work at TRRO came up I said that Kantha will be handling all the major work and the Secretary and I will bring to their notice local requests, etc. Regarding the question of informing Mr. Sivertsen of these developments, I was not in agreement with Kantha's position because:—
  - a) this was not a problem relating to TRRO (TRRO as an organisation never came into these discussions), and
  - b) even at that this was only a misunderstanding and we were at it to see that the air was cleared.

I wish to reiterate that this was a problem neither within TRRO nor about it. The Mannar Project with which Mr. Sivertsen was associated was never a bone of contention.

9. The statements issued by TRRO on 28-6-88 and 18-7-88 clearly express how we value Kantha's services, and the efforts we have taken to find out what has happened.

10. At this stage, it should be mentioned that TRRO was only ONE of the organisations in which Kantha had a deep and abiding interest — New Era Printers, Home for Human Rights, Deepam and Tamil Information Centre. I had never taken an interest in the working of the other organisations and was concentrating only on TRRO.

But being institutions founded by the same group there were inter-connections. I had kept up only these minimum connections. TRRO itself was enough "extension" of work for me. I did not want to take an interest in other organisations.

11. It should be mentioned that all the actions relating to this problem have been taken in conjunction and after discussion with the Board of Governors, and if we were not able to call a meeting with all the available members. The decisions were joint ones.
12. TRRO and personally myself have been in touch with many persons trying to find out the details regarding what happened, is happening to Kantha. We have had to take decisions and steps within the framework of such activities. We could never take a decision which could turn counter productive.
13. Right now the IPKF is in touch with the TRRO regarding the abduction of Kantha. They have met us 4—5 times. We have explained our position and have handed over relevant documents.
14. It is my duty to assure all concerned in knowing what has happened/is happening to Kantha, that TRRO is continuing to do all what it can and is also prepared to help them in every possible manner.

**K. Sivathamby,**  
**Chairman, TRRO.**  
 19-8-1988.

## 'SAVE KANTHASAMY' APPEAL

Mr. K. Kanthasamy, an able Human Rights activist, founder-member of the Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation (TRRO). Director, Central British Fund for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation (CBFTRR, London: 1978), and the prime mover in several outstanding ventures such as the Jaffna-based SATURDAY REVIEW (1982). Tamil Information Centres (London, Madras: 1983, Madurai: 1984). Movement for Integration of Refugees and Repatriates (MIRT, Madurai: 1984). Theepam Research Institute (Jaffna: 1980), is known to have been kidnapped by a group of persons from his Jaffna residence on Sunday, June 19. Even after five days, no information is available either about his safety or whereabouts.

The fact that Mr. Kanthasamy is a silent, tireless, self-effacing worker and that he shunned office and publicity does not make us forget the fact that no individual had given so much to the promotion of Human Rights in general and in particular to the alleviation of the sufferings of the Tamil Community as he had done for the past eleven years. At the time of the kidnapping, Mr. Kanthasamy, who had undergone a major heart surgery five years ago, was active in setting up a consortium of Non-governmental organisations to undertake refugee rehabilitation programmes in North-East Sri Lanka.

We, the signatories, who have known and appreciated his major contributions and his selfless service, hereby appeal to whoever is responsible for his kidnapping to release him safely so that he can

continue his services. We feel strongly that any harm done to him will be remembered as an enormous crime against society.

1. LORD AVEBURY : Chairman, Human Rights Group, UNITED KINGDOM
2. KUMAR RUPASINGHE : International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, NORWAY
3. JUSTICE V. R. KRISHNA IYER : Retired Judge of the Supreme Court INDIA
4. NINAN KOSHY : Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches, Geneva SWITZERLAND
5. WALTER KELLER : South Asia Bureau, WEST GERMANY
6. DUTCH ORGANISATION : THE NETHERLANDS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT
7. DESMOND FERNANDO : Civil Rights Movement, Colombo SRI LANKA
8. NILS SIVERSEN : Norwegian Refugee Council, NORWAY
9. N. RAMAMURTHY : Quaker Peace & Service, Friends House, Euston Road, London UNITED KINGDOM
10. MICHAEL HAWKES : Christian Aid, UNITED KINGDOM
11. JOB FEENEY : 'TROCAIRE' IRELAND
12. CHARLES ABEYSEKERA : Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE), SRI LANKA
13. VICTOR KARUNAN : Pax Ramona, Geneva SWITZERLAND
14. INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS, Geneva SWITZERLAND

15. V. SURIYANARAYAN : Professor, Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, University of Madras, INDIA
16. MARTIN ENNALS : Director, International Alert, UNITED KINGDOM
17. REV. FR. MICHAEL DE MORTIER : Orions Asian Centre, BELGIUM
18. MARTIN BARBER : Director, British Refugee Council, UNITED KINGDOM
19. REV. HAHN : Director, Bread for the World, WEST GERMANY
20. Y. DAVID : President, Samuthaya Samuthaya Iyakkam, Madras, INDIA
21. S. V. PERINPANAYAGAM : Chairman, Central British Fund for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation, London, UNITED KINGDOM
22. R. SATHIYAMURTHY : Vice-President, National Y.M.C.A. New Delhi, INDIA
23. P. RAJANAYAGAM : President, Standing Committee of Tamils (SCOTT) UNITED KINGDOM
24. T. N. GOPALAN : Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Madurai, INDIA
25. CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES, CANADA
26. JUSTICE AND RIGHTS : UNITED KINGDOM
27. HENRI TTMAGNE : Organising Secretary, Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties, Tamilnadu, INDIA
28. K. SACHITHANANDAN : Non-Violent Direct Action Group, Chayakatchcheri, Jaffna, SRI LANKA
29. MAHESWARY VELAUTHAM : Secretary, Movement for Integration of Refugees and Repatriates (MIRR), Madurai, INDIA
- former Director, Tamil Information Centre, Madurai, INDIA
30. S. SIVANAYAGAM : Founder-Editor, SATURDAY REVIEW, Jaffna and former Editor/Director Tamil Information & Research Unit, Madras, INDIA



## OTHER PLEAS FOR KANTHASAMY'S SAFE RETURN

Other public appeals made for Kanthasamy's release included those made by:—

Virginia Leary, Associate Dean and Professor of Law of the State University of New York and author of **Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka**, a report of a mission to Sri Lanka in July-August 1981 for the International Commission of Jurists

TROCAIRE, the Catholic Agency for World Development

The Canberra Tamil Association Incorporated

CEBEMO (a Dutch development co-financing agency)

ICCO (another Dutch development financing agency)

The Commission for Justice and Peace of the Netherlands

The Jaffna Municipal Commissioner Mr. C. V. K. Sivagnanam

Twelve Social Service Organisations from Trincomalee, namely Trinco YMHA, Trinco Co-ordinating Com-

mittee, Trinco District Development Society, Eastern Organisation for Human and Economic Development, Trinco Women Welfare Organisation, Sarvodaya, Eastern Sri Lanka Rehabilitation Organisation, Rotary Club, Trinco YMA and Trinco District Development Centre.

38 Tamil Political Prisoners in Boossa detention camp

The DMK Leader Mr. M. Karunanidhi of Tamil Nadu

A group of fifteen human rights activists who have consistently supported redress for the legitimate grievances of the Tamil community and a just solution to the ethnic problem, namely Sunil Bastian, J. Uyangoda, Newton Gunasinghe, Charles Abeysekera, Prins Rajasooriya, H. N. Fernando, Ainsley Samarajiwa, Desmond Fernando, Oscar Pereira, Bernadeen Silva, Suranjith Hewamanne, Dr. Brian Seneviratne, Suriya Wickremasinghe, Reggie Siriwardene, Fr. Paul Caspersz.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Committee also records its gratitude to the following institutions and persons who have given support financially and in various other ways: New Era Publications, Jaffna; Non-Violent Direct Action Group, Jaffna; Sri Lanka Human Rights Campaign, Australia; World Council of Churches, Geneva; Andrew Blane; Stefanie Grant; S. J. C. Kadirgamar QC; R. Narendranathan; Shirin Persson; Richard Reoch; T. Selvakumar; Bernadeen Silva; Reggie Siriwardene; T. Someswaran; K. N. Tharmalingam; Jane Ward.

The poem "Waiting for the Soldier" was first published in late 1987. A friend in Colombo sent a copy to Kanthasamy in Jaffna in early 1988.

The cover photograph was taken in the Supreme Court in May 1980 at the time of the trial of S. Nadesan QC for breach of parliamentary privilege.

## OUR APPEAL

"Though the study here is interesting, to say the fact I am not happy at all. The thought of Kantha Anna's disappearance and the fate of his precious life brings me lot of suffering."

9 October, 1988.

"We must somehow find out what exactly happened to him. If he is dead, we must still find out all the details. To me that is very important, and I think you probably feel the same. My feeling is that I want to know every detail about his last days or hours. If the truth is horrible, it will give us even worse pain. But I feel that if we know it, we are in some way sharing his ordeal, and in that we can feel that he did not die alone."

30 October, 1988.

These are extracts from letters exchanged by two Sri Lankans who had worked closely with Kanthasamy for many years, but who did not come to know each other until after his abduction. In the first article in this volume, another writer too has described the particular anguish suffered by the family and friends of a person the details of whose fate remains unknown.

The Kanthasamy Commemoration Committee once again appeals for any information about Kanthasamy's fate.

Colombo, Sri Lanka.

19 June, 1989.

## WAITING FOR THE SOLDIER

*"I hope you'll find a more companionable person to play chess with than a computer."*

- *Nirmala Salgado, in a letter.*

After the Roman army took Syracuse,  
a soldier, in the midst of the looting and raping,  
stopped when he saw a Greek bent over  
figures inscribed in the sand. Gaping,

the Roman watched his strange absorption  
in that magic of lines and circles. He  
(not looking up at the soldier) said, "Move!  
With your shadow there it's hard to see!"

The soldier hit him on the head, and so  
Archimedes died. If, then, today  
I turn more and more to this ordered world  
of sixty-four squares, to the mimic play

of forces in a field where nobody bleeds;  
where in the intervals of the game my silent friend  
won't annoy me by spouting racist drivel  
or Marxist simplicities; if the chief end

of life at present seems to be to find  
an infallible answer to the French Defence  
(my opponent's favourite opening), don't say  
I am escaping. In a world without sense

one must look for meaning wherever one  
can find it — if only, perhaps, for a day  
or two. I know the Roman soldier —  
in one shape or another — is on the way.

REGGIE SIRIWARDENA







Kandiah Kanthasamy was born in 1930 in Maviddapuram, Jaffna. Graduating in Mathematics from the University of Ceylon, Colombo, he subsequently qualified as a lawyer and practised in the fields of commercial and company law. On the way to the peak of an outstanding legal career, he turned aside to devote himself to human rights work and organising practical assistance to persons displaced and dispossessed by the internal conflicts that ravaged Sri Lanka from the late 1970s. While thus engaged he was abducted in Jaffna on 19 June 1988, and is presumed to have been killed. This book is being brought out on the anniversary of his abduction.