



**AUSTRALIAN TAMIL
MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

Jaffna Plane and Global Hawk – Lest we Forget

I write in response to the Sri Lanka Guardian article ‘A hundred years of flight in Sri Lanka – time to take stock’ by Dr. Ruwantissa Abeyratne

At a time when many educated Sri Lankans of Sinhalese origins are highly critical of the Sri Lankan President over alleged interference with Judicial Powers – I was surprised to read the following by a legal expert Dr. Ruwantissa Abeyratne: *‘With such rapid winds sweeping through the commercial aviation world, what should Sri Lanka do? We should take an example from the visionary thoughts of the President of Sri Lanka which he put forward at the launch of the space age of Sri Lanka when Supreme SAT-1 was launched into orbit. The President said in his message: “The launch of this satellite will be the beginning of more such ventures that will help promote Foreign Direct Investment, increase export earnings to the country, and help greatly in the transfer of technology within and outside this Region”.*

I can see no reason why this same proactive approach cannot be adopted in the context of commercial aviation in Sri Lanka and its national carrier!!’

My feelings of ownership with Sri Lanka’s national carrier – Airlanka / Sri Lankan Airlines – instantaneously rejected the above suggestion by Dr. Abeyratne. I was not going to respond at first but thought I owed it to Tamil investors in Airlanka to share my Truth in this issue. As if to bless my efforts, I received an email from fellow Australian Tamil – Colonel Ramanathan as follows: *‘This is a photo of the Global Hawk UAV that recently returned from the war zone under it's own power. (Iraq to Edward's AFB in CA) - Not transported via C5 or C17.The Global Hawk is controlled via satellite. It flew missions that went from Edwards AFB, CA. and back nonstop. Basically, they come into the fight at a high mach # using military thrust power, fire their AMRAAMS, and no one ever sees them or paints with radar. There is practically no radio chatter because all the guys in the flight are tied together electronically and can see who is targeting who, and they have AWACS (Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems) direct input, as well as 360 situational awareness from that and other sensors. The enemy had a definite morale problem before it was all over. It is to air superiority what the jet engine was to aviation. It can taxi out, take off, fly a mission, return, land and taxi back on its own. There are no blackouts, pilot fatigue, relief tubes, ejection seats, and best of all, no dead pilots, and no POWs.’*

The way I did when I applied for the position of UN Secretary General when Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala was nominated, I sought to present the investment of Sri Lankan Tamils in Global

Aviation to dilute the maya / delusion I saw in the picture drawn by Dr. Abeyratne in relation to Aviation in Sri Lanka.

My work with Air Lanka happened after a holy-man from Thiruketheeswaram temple said to me **‘Like Murugan you will go around the globe on the peacock’**. I felt the greater significance of this when I learnt later that the logo of Air Lanka was the peacock. The name of the Air Lanka staff magazine was named ‘monara’ – meaning peacock. My first overseas job happened due to Air Lanka. I believe that my natural way of attributing credit to elders / seniors within family and at the workplace until I felt that the total of my work through that relationship / position is common – helped me become global through Singaporeans who trained us in Management of Aviation activities at international standards. Mr. Colin Martinus, the best Administrator known to me was part of this team headed by a Tamil Mr. Kulesegaram who honored me by asking Mr. Martinus to second me from Commercial Administration to Financial Administration. Mr. Kulesegaram honored us by worshipping with his family, at the Ganesh temple (New Kathiresan temple) at the Colombo suburb of Bambalapitiya. These are natural connections that invoke the invisible forces. They continue to influence me from within to share my current work with the needy at Air Lanka / Sri Lankan Airlines – even today. The medium are those who have faith in me. Mrs. Yasmin Pakeerally Majeed whose first job started at Airlanka, and who continues to work at Sri Lankan Airlines in a senior position, for example feels free to contact me anytime she needs advice in relation to work issues. I am always introduced by Yasmin to others as her first boss and mentor. The sharing through such faith is the strongest foundation known to me. Based on such strength, the current merit-based work needed for fulfillment through such positions is very little. Those lacking in faith have to do the work from zero base. This is the basis for Equal Opportunity laws.

Dr. Abeyratne states *‘In 1996, pursuant to an initiative by the International Civil Aviation Organization, which was robustly assisted by the Canadian Government, the United Nations General Assembly, by resolution officially recognized 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day and listed it as an official UN day. The purpose of the global celebration is to generate and reinforce worldwide awareness of the importance of international civil aviation in the social and economic development of States, and of the role of ICAO in promoting the safety, efficiency and regularity of international air transport. Each year on this day, ICAO celebrates this global dedication with a theme. In 2012 the ICAO theme is “Aviation – Your Reliable Connection to the World”.’*

One who celebrates International Values needs to stay close to Truth or use facts that apply to the whole institution whose status is being used towards such valuation – in this instance - the UN with all member states of the UN. When using the investment of Sri Lanka particularly, credit needs to be attributed from the root – when we use time basis – such as 100 years. The UN itself is not as old. Hence the credit taken is very local. UN is the personification of the values of migration towards globalization. When we migrate to other countries – it is like rebirth – which means we take only the essence of our investments in our countries of origin and leave behind the form and its merits in our old society. Likewise, when countries join the UN. Our true investments in the old time-based vertical hierarchical systems would convert themselves into space-based horizontal systems and take current

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values. In Accounting we have a special section for 'current cost accounting' as opposed to 'historic cost accounting'. Dr. Abeyratne states '**Sri Lanka remains highly respected within the aviation community**'. If Sri Lankan aviation goodwill is taken as an Asset – was the above measured through current cost or historic cost? To take both is duplication and therefore is misleading.

In his article 'Ceylon's first flights' published in the Sunday Times on 02 December 2012, Roger Theideman states '*This month the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL) is commemorating 100 years of aviation in Ceylon/Sri Lanka. But the first flight of an aeroplane in Ceylon took place on December 25, 1911. That's right – 101 years ago. So why are Sri Lankan 'aerocrats' celebrating the centenary in 2012? Are they living up to that unkind tag bestowed on SriLankan Airlines and its predecessor Air Lanka: 'UL' (Usually Late)?*'

Mr. Roger Theideman wrote in the Sunday Times on 01 August 1999 an article entitled '**How Ceylon Tamils sent plane named 'Jaffna'**'

Mr. Roger Theideman states in this article '*Today there are communities of Sri Lanka-born families scattered around the world. The Australian cities of Melbourne and Sydney, for instance, are home to two of the largest populations of Sri Lankans outside Sri Lanka. London, England is another example, as is Toronto in Canada.*

But long before this trend (which began with the exodus of the Burghers after World War Two) there was another migratory flow from Ceylon that has largely gone unnoticed and, therefore, received little publicity over the years. Nowadays, visitors to Singapore and Malaysia (formerly Malaya), would notice the strong influence of Tamil names and people throughout all strata of business and public life in those countries.....

A feature of Baker's 'fund-a-fighter-plane' campaign was that each aircraft donated to the Royal Flying Corps bore a name significant to its donors. For example, some of the names given to the planes were: "Alma Baker"; "Malacca Chinese"; "Wi Cheng Kim", and "Kuala Kuangsar".

*But one of the more interesting donations resulted from a brainwave of **Mr. M. Subramaniam, a native of Mallakam, Jaffna**, then working in the Survey Department at Kuala Lumpur. Inspired by Mr. Alma Baker's untiring efforts, he enlisted the support of other expatriate Jaffna Tamils towards raising money for a fighter plane that they could call their own.*

The undertaking was a great success. Contributions came pouring in from Ceylon Tamils and their families living and working in all parts of the Malay States: Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Taiping, Pahang, Selangor, etc. Within five months of launching the appeal, the handsome sum of Pounds Sterling £2250 was raised, enabling the Ceylon Tamils of Malaya to contribute a brand-new fighter plane to help the British combat the dreaded 'Hun'.

The aircraft was a F.E.2b, built by the Royal Aircraft Factory of Britain. Like most other airplanes of its day, it was a flimsy biplane (two pairs of wings, one mounted above the other), and could be used both as a fighter plane and a night bomber. It carried a pilot and one passenger, the latter to fire the guns or drop bombs. Unusually, the plane's single 120-

horsepower engine was mounted behind the pilot with the propeller facing backwards, an installation called a 'pusher powerplant'.

*This F.E.2b was presented to the British Government on **December 22, 1915**. The justifiable pride of the Tamils who had helped to purchase the plane was embodied in the name they bestowed on their gift. In honour of their hometown in Ceylon, the fighter plane was dubbed "Jaffna".*

One wonders, as the aerial battles raged over Europe, how much death and destruction rained down on the Germans from a frail little fighter plane with the innocuous name "Jaffna", far away from the city of the same name?

Little would anyone have imagined that, several decades later, the town of Jaffna would play a pivotal role in another theatre of war back in Sri Lanka itself.

Nothing is known of the fate of the F.E.2b plane called "Jaffna". But the story of the Ceylon Tamils of Malaya, uniting in a spirit of patriotism, gratitude and generosity to gift an airplane to the British Empire, will long live in the annals of Malaysian and Singaporean history'

Malaysian & Singapore Tamils are the elders of Tamil Diaspora of today. Each time I am supported by Malaysian or Singapore Tamils in my work in Tamil areas of Sri Lanka, I thank those elders who must have experienced difficulties in their new home-countries and yet managed to include their home-town's name in responding to a global call. All western countries that take credit for ending World War II owe Jaffna Tamils to help us during our time of need. That is the true spirit of globalization. This is the true spirit of Oneness. We may be small in position, but when we work in the consciousness of our home that gives us credit at the total / whole level. Fighting at the physical level needs to happen after we feel part of the whole through such home-contributions and that too only in defence and not to attack. This is why I often say that the Pariah (toilet cleaner/lowest class migrant) and the Vice Chancellor are both equals in ownership of a University. Hence the mighty American Global Hawk came through fellow Australian Tamil Colonel Ramanathan to support Jaffna Plane.

My maternal great-grandfather who was blessed by Jaffna Saint Yoga Swami's Guru's Guru – Kadayit Swami is one of those who went overseas and sent money to support education of Jaffna Tamils. Another is my husband's father Mr. Nallathamby Subramaniam who also worked in Malaysia during the time of World War II and later settled down in Vattukottai where the pride and valuation in being Ceylon Tamil is strong and hence Vattukottai Resolution towards independent Tamil state. To the extent Tamils carry these ancestral values forward – we would continue to be supported by global powers. Lest we forget Jaffna Tamils who sacrificed themselves so we may live in freedom from poverty and ignorance.

Gajalakshmi Paramasivam 06 December 2012