
LTTE misled diaspora, kept them in dark to exploit them, say former LTTE members

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Interview with Daya Master and George MasterColombo, (asiantribune.com): As the curtains are finally coming down on the LTTE saga, Daya Master, the media wizard for the Tigers for years, believes that Prabhakaran's game is up. "People will not accept him (Prabhakaran)," he says. "It is too late; the people have already rejected the man and if he takes a decision that he should have taken long ago ... to return to his old native place to live in peace... it will not help"; Daya Master, whose name is Velayutham Thayanithi, asserts.

He and George Master, who was an interpreter for late Tamilselvan, believe that Tigers had deliberately misled the Diaspora and that in fact had put them in the dark over the ground situation. "It is time the diaspora comes to grips with the reality of the situation back home and lend their might for furthering the political process". Daya Master and George Master were interviewed as they merged out of the LTTE shadows. George spoke in English. Daya spoke in native Tamil. Given here are excerpts from the interview. Daya's replies are given in English translation. Question: George Master, you are a person who believes in non-violence. My question to you, when did you realize violence or terrorism was not the path to address the burning issues of the Tamil people and when did you decide to reject the crimes perpetrated by the LTTE? Any immediate reasons for your decision to slip out of the LTTE grip? George Master: From the very inception of the political negotiations put into process by the Government of Sri Lanka in the 95's ... First, because I came as a part-time interpreter in 94 October... months later I was a party to the team that negotiated... that went on with the LTTE Peace Team which negotiated with the Government delegation ... from that time onwards, I was actively participating as a part-time interpreter with the firm conviction that negotiation should bring an end result - a negotiated settlement acceptable to all citizens of Sri Lanka wherein people can live in peace and in amity. In that context, after Geneva 2, it was in 2006, I think in the mid 2006, I found that peace negotiations collapsed and there was no purpose in my continuing to be an interpreter, a part-time interpreter for Mr. Tamilselvan, since there were no peace negotiations at all, no discussions were taking place with foreign dignitaries, I felt that my presence was not necessary, and I decided that I have to sever connections with the organization, because it was not necessary for me to continue with an organization that has, as its goal, the settlement of the problem through violence means, which I am against, so I decided to quit even as a part-time interpreter on payment and I quit. Subsequently I was in my village, kept on trying hard to get out of this mess, as I wanted to join my daughter in Australia. Therefore, I tried my best but then the conditions prevailed there was not conducive, the system did not permit me to leave Vanni. So I was waiting for some more time and when people were trying to leave in large numbers when the humanitarian operation was put into by the present Government, I found things were not that easy for civilians to get out, because the LTTE's strict resistance was in place against those people trying to get out but only the ablest of the lot were able to get out and the weaklings were unable to get out because LTTE were firing from behind. On one fine day, I found people getting ready to break the barriers in large numbers, and that was a convenient opportunity for me, and on the 20th of this month, that was a Monday, I joined the group with many thousands, it was a very difficult journey, it took about one and a half hours for me to reach the bund that was separating the Mathalam Hospital and the military controlled area. Therein I was taken in by the military personal comfortably. They removed me physically and put me inside the military zone and thereafter I came to the check-point, I declared to those officers there that I worked for a period of time from 1994 up to 2006 as a part-time interpreter and therefore it was my duty to bring to the notice of the officers there of my connection with the LTTE in whatever manner it was. And so they listened to me and they gave me time to sit down there and recorded my statement. It took some time. It was a process, anyway and then we were brought to Omanthai. There also again the process was repeated and we were placed in the police custody and from there we have now come to Colombo, where in we are now engaged in this discussion. Yes, that's it. Question: Well, what I gathered from your statement was that your subconscious mind always said that LTTE never liked to sever itself from violence, so you thought it was time to get rid of this outfit that believes in violence, because you as a man who works according to your conscience and could not support any of the clandestine violent and destructive activities that always had devastating impact on the civilians. George Master: Yes on the outset, I mentioned that I always hate, from the very inception, I hate violence. And my firm conviction is that it is not through violence that one can reach political solution for any national conflicts or in this context, this cannot be an exception to that. I decided that I sever connection because, I reject violence, because violence has never ever brought successful end for any conflicts and therefore it is only negotiations that will bring about a settlement to any national conflict. Question: Now, You, Mr. Daya Master. Why did you decide to leave the LTTE? When did you realize that violence or terrorism was not the correct path that it wouldn't ever bring about a lasting solution to the burning issues of the Tamil people? Daya Master: Since the LTTE broke off from the peace talks in 2006, I no longer wanted to be a part of the LTTE outfit and was waiting for an opportunity to leave the outfit. I could not agree with their decision to end the peace talks, so I wanted to leave, but there was not suitable opportunity to leave. During the period when I was a member of the outfit, we were told that members cannot leave the outfit; therefore I was unable to leave. I continued to work without any given position for a short period of time. When we started to move from location to location, we moved to Puthumathalam. When I was there, I terminated all contacts with them and stayed indoors. I moved from there to Puthumathalam with a large group of people. But after a while, I was forced to resume contact with them and I started to work for them for a while. Then on the 20th of April, I had the opportunity to fulfil my intention. Sri Lanka Army was approaching toward Muthumatriam area, LTTE was dispersing from there, I used the opportunity to flee from the LTTE and went towards the army. The army took my family and myself to Valipunam camp, and I introduced myself as Daya Master and then they treated me well and took me to Omanthai after that they processed us and now I come here to participate in this discussion in Colombo. Question: This question is for both of you, Daya Master, George Master. We think you both have had first hand experience of how LTTE

was using civilians as hostages and human shield in the NFZ. We would like to get some idea about how LTTE was using civilians as its protective gear. Daya Master: LTTE leaders are not allowing the Tamil civilians to leave and are keeping them as hostages for their own benefit. Recently in the Suthanthriapuram area, LTTE attacked civilians who tried to escape. They shot them, many people were killed. About 200 people were killed by LTTE, but they put the blame on the army and said these people were killed in army shelling. LTTE has a well organized media network around the world for a really vicious propaganda campaign. In fact when those people fled to Puthmathilam area, LTTE started opening fire on those who tried to flee from there; they killed many civilians. LTTE started to assault people and opened fire at people whenever they tried to escape from their control. Question: We also heard that LTTE even continued to conscript people forcibly even in the 'no fire zone' and they also confiscated most of the essential items dispatched by the Government. Your comment? Daya Master: Regardless where the LTTE was relocated, be it be Suthanthirapuram, Udayarkattu, Puthkuddyiruppu, then Puthumathilam, they will take those who were born in 1994, 1995 - sometimes even 1996 were also forcibly recruited- to join the LTTE outfit. Not only this, they even forced the only child of a family to join them. Even people with heart diseases and kidney malfunctions were not spared. When the children were forced to join the LTTE, the parents started to object; they started to protest against LTTE, but LTTE would assault the parents and carry on with their recruitment. Question: George Master, we would like you to share your experience. I know that you had to walk on a very rough terrain to cross over from the Tiger held areas to the Government controlled area. George Master: The intention to leave the area came somewhere in mid-2006, but unfortunately since the travel restrictions were in force, I wasn't provided the pass for travel outside Vanni, but I was trying frantically to find a way out of the messy situation. After the humanitarian operations started, little-by-little, people were moving from vantage points and started to escape without being noticed by the LTTE, but unfortunately every time people could move away from the LTTE, fresh barriers came up and these were manned by the carders; therefore civilians met with violence and many of them died and many were injured. As an old person, I could not possibly make a decision to dare cross the frontline and get shot; so I was waiting for a more convenient time. And in the process, we were moving from place to place, you know Udayarkattu, Visvamadhu, Suthanthirapuram, like that we were moving from place to place and in Suthanthirapuram there were couple of openings to escape; some people suggested that I accompany them, but then the reports I heard were that there were serious attacks by the LTTE carders on all those civilians who dared to escape from their area. Again I came to Devipuram without daring to move, but when I came to Mullivakkal, on the 17th of April, I had to go to Valiyamadham to draw my pension; I walked along the sea coast to reach Valiyamadham to draw my pension, and then my relatives, my village relatives were in Puthumathalam, therefore I decided to go and look at those children, since I was separated from them for about 2 weeks. Then I went to Puthumathalam and found that they were in make-shift tents and their conditions were very bad. On that night, my relatives told me that the chances of escape were bright. What we have to do is waiting for the right moment when people break out in large numbers so that we can join them. So I took the risk and then decided to stay with them. And on the 20th morning around 4 am, we found a large number of people moving in the direction of the hospital and then round about 6 o'clock, we also decided to mingle with them. Of course, the sound firing was very close to us and we took the risk. My relatives helped me; the small kids gave their hands and pulled me through the mud; so it was a very difficult journey; very hazardous journey. But, I decided 'I am going to take the chance even if I am going to get shot, even if it is going to be death like David in the famous novel. 'I am David'. Once I get shot that is the end of it and thereafter I will not know what happened to me. If that becomes my fate, well, take it. Otherwise, I will be lucky to come into safe hands. And I was lucky, I was able to cross over and here I am. Question: Well, George Master, you narrated a very, very emotional story and you also told me that a Sri Lankan soldier had helped you out to pass through the slippery area. George Master: True. True. It was not slippery area just for me; it was for all whether they were children, adults, or old people, invalids and all. When I say invalids, even sick people they had to cross because they wanted to get away from this mess. You know the small kids who came with me, warned me, 'You will slip and fall. Be careful'. But as small kids, they couldn't properly give me the help required to pull me out of that place. But the soldier was there on the other side; he saw me. And just volunteered to come close and held me by his hands and said 'grandfather'. That was really reassuring for me, and there I was in his hands. Question: So you are not the David now? George Master: I am not the David now. Question: George! History bears evidence that Prabhakaran was invited to negotiate for a settlement from the very early days of his brutal campaign. He started his life of murder and kill joy when he first assassinated the Mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiyappa. You know Duraiyappa is a fellow Tamil. Ever since, violence against the Tamil people exacerbated and dictated terms. New Delhi initiated certain settlement process, negotiations. Sri Lankan Government invited him several times and many facilitators volunteered to be mediators for the both parties to the conflict, but however Prabhakaran did not show any genuine interest in becoming a true partner to the talks regarding the peace process. You have been a member of the team; being a member of the delegation to the Geneva talks, what is your assessment of Prabhakaran? Is Prabhakaran genuinely interested in achieving lasting peace through democratic means or is he a staunch practitioner of bomb and gun? George Master: Having participated as an interpreter for the head of the political division, who was invariably the head of the delegation many times from the beginning in 1995, negotiating with the government of Sri Lanka, headed by Madam Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaratunga, up until 2006, to the delegation that came to Geneva under the leadership of Minister Nimal Sripala De Silva under the regime of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, and as a senior citizen who have concern about the Tamil citizenry, the judgment of the process was that it was not taking us anywhere near the desired goal. Yet I continued to be a part of the delegation with a fervent hope that one day we will be able to arrive at a negotiated settlement. If a person decides to be a part of an exercise that invariably spells out a negotiated settlement, because the process is termed as negotiation, and so negotiation definitely should not be accompanied with violence and this was my perception. Because you sit around a table and discuss, so I hoped that this negotiation would bring results, but when

negotiations collapsed in 2006, I had lost all the hope in the LTTE as an organization that would bring the desired result for the Tamil peoples; therefore I decided to stay away from it, because my contribution has in no way helped the organization to bring about a negotiated settlement. Question: Which means that Prabhakaran took each period of ceasefire for respite, to mobilize funds, to mobilize more cadres, regroup and recommence violent campaigns. In that context, would you agree that he was never a leader who wanted to achieve peace and stability through democratic means? George Master: That is the bottom-line; I would say 'yes' after observing this process for such a long time. Finally at the end of 2006 … that was the period the negotiations collapsed. Question: Well, on his way to the creation of a world of his own, Prabhakaran removed all those Tamil politicians, Tamil civilians who were otherwise potentially a threat to him, and he continued his killing spree. He enjoyed killing people, he enjoyed killing his enemies and he was never interested in any negotiated settlement. He only believed in violence never accepted negotiated or peaceful settlements, we cannot fathom what his psyche is like and what he is trying to achieve? George Master: Nobody has the right to kill anybody else. Killing somebody is violence, to settle something with somebody with death; nobody can resort to violence and kill anybody that was legally not allowed and that person would be punished. If anybody on the other hand has absolute power with him that will exculpate him from the legal position to be prosecuted for that crime to kill anybody at will, that is horrendous and that cannot take place in any society, because there is a process of investigation, there is a process of judicial proceedings where a person will be found guilty of murder and will be charged and given punishment. Here is a person who commits murder and escapes. That is not a correct procedure. When it comes to Tamil politicians, I am not here to pass judgment on somebody's actions, but as a senior citizen, I feel that it is very sad that senior or junior, Tamil politicians have been at various periods of time killed at random and what their offence, no one explained… they were just killed . It is a loss to a community of people … to kill people like this. It is a wanton damage done to remove intellectuals… If they differ from you in their political opinion, democratic means are there - to sit down and talk to them and iron out differences and see what is wrong rather than you continue to kill people, that is not the way. In the democratic process, there are avenues for discussion and then settling problems in the most peaceful ways, but I feel that it has been a curse on the Tamil Community… so many intellectuals were lost for no valid reason. Question: Even though Prabhakaran rejected association with other Tamil politicians and political parties, we know that he has a close association with the TNA, Tamil National Alliance, and in turn TNA says that they are the sole representatives of the Tamil people. George Master, I would like to know from you what they, the TNA have done to get Prabhakaran's trust. If they claim that they are the sole representative of Tamil people, what have they done to justify that claim that they are sole representative of the Tamil people in Parliament… The supreme legislative body in this country to make laws…. Have they taken any steps to address the issues of the Tamil people in a meaningful way rather than becoming LTTE proxies? George Master: If one take an analysis of their innings… so many terms as members of parliament, representing the Tamil people, well, it was a dismal record, because the day-to-day needs of the people were so many; political needs of the people unresolved for more than three decades… contribution of the Tamil National Alliance MPs has been very poor in the sense that they have not shown to the people that they care for the people, and they have concern for the people. They are living in a very entirely secluded world where they are separated from the people, isolated from the people, so the people who have elected them have totally lost confidence in these MPs who are called Tamil National Alliances (TNA) they have not served any useful purpose as far as the Tamil civilians are concerned. Question: The LTTE are now on the verge of collapse; they are on the threshold of receiving their deserving end to their struggle. Prabhakaran must be fighting with his own conscience for the sins he committed, but he still fights, he continues to fight, we cannot understand his purpose. George Master, why do you think he is still fighting... a futile attempt… rather than lay down the arms? George Master: The best option for the LTTE leader is to lay down arms in the interest of the people. As you said, it has now been proved to be a futile attempt that he cannot hold fort. He should have taken that option in a very responsible manner so that people could have been saved from all this hardship of displacement, running from place to place and pushed into penury… Unfortunately, he did not opt to do that… He continues to rely on the war option… It is a sad situation on the Tamil psyche to find a person engaged continuously on a very futile attempt and wasting his time and the Tamil people's time and ultimately ending up as somebody who is running, who is fighting for a desperate bid to extricate himself from this mess or to just to drag on this war meaninglessly… Question: Do you think Prabhakaran is expecting some international intervention … support … to rescue him even at this last minute? George Master: People in desperate situations normally anticipate, however remote the chances are, for some miracle to happen for them to be extricated, but unfortunately such chances, as one who could see the International developments… how the International community looks at the problem… how the paradigm shifted after the humanitarian operations has been put into effect, one could say no such thing could happen. Therefore, it is in vain that he is expecting for somebody to give him a helping hand; it cannot happen; it is not going to happen. Question: We call that the drowning man clutches even a straw. George Master: Even the tiniest straw that comes across, because that is the human nature, so this person is also no exception. So he, probably, thinks that somebody will come help in the end. Question: Will there be a final straw for him? George Master: No… I don't think so… Question: Daya Master, what is your opinion about this some helpful straw? Will somebody come to help out Prabhakaran? Daya Master: As I said earlier, nobody will come to help him. This is my opinion. Question: Suppose that he doesn't earn the International support, then what will be the options available for him? Are there any options available …? Daya Master: At this point, he has only 3 options, in my opinion. The first is to bite into the cyanide capsule and commit suicide, or lay down the weapons and surrender, or escaping into some other region. I think these are the only options he has. Question: As you see, the cadres and civilians are rejecting and isolating Prabhakaran, what is the best solution left for these frustrated cadres and the suffering civilians? Daya Master: What I would like to say to those old members and young members is that after we surrender here, we are living without any problem, likewise they should lay down their

weapons and come to the Army controlled area. This is my advice to them… The civilians who are still there should come over as well. They can live their future happily. Question: George Master, what in your opinion can be the best available option for the remaining Tiger cadres and the civilians who have been held captive, held hostage, by the LTTE in the remaining Tiger held area? What is the best solution available for them? George Master: As far as the Tiger cadres are concerned, there is a special message given by the President that they lay down their arms and surrender, they will be treated in the appropriate manner. That is a clear message, very explicit message, so the Tiger cadres, they have to take the message very seriously. And also see what has happened to those cadres who have already left and in the hands of the military personnel, how they are treated they can weigh these things and then make a decision to renounce violence, throw away the arms, leave the leader and then come to military controlled area. For the rest of the people here, you see, displacement for anybody from the natural habitat is not a pleasant thing. Anybody for that matter, whether one lives in Horona or Matara or Mathakal or Karveddi, Neerveli or wherever, the person does not like to get shifted from his or her natural habitat. That is the natural human tendency, unfortunately things have been moving in a direction where people had to move away from their natural habitat for reasons of security. That is a very unpleasant situation, but to safeguard their lives, and need time for the Government to clear the area and provide them the chance of resettlement and rehabilitation in a more conducive environment for that purpose the rest of the population. You know, when I say it, I am telling with a lot of responsibility, as a senior citizen. I know the conditions of old generation people who are sick, who cannot move from place to place, it is very difficult for them to move from that area and walk into the military areas. It is very difficult, but it has become an absolute necessity today, because that area has to be cleared by the government forces, that have to be done, and therefore, the rest of the population must find their way into areas under government control and thereafter think about the resettlement. Question: Do you think Government of Sri Lanka is taking deep care in ensuring that the Tamils who are captured by the LTTE, who are detained by the LTTE are taken away safely. Otherwise the government with this massive military strength would have finished this war overnight, but the Government is continuing to have its patience because it wants to ensure that the civilians are not affected. George Master: I have heard this sentiment being expressed by many civilians during the last few days when people were observing that it was very much easier according to their calculation. You know they calculated from day the humanitarian operations started from Mannar and see the progress. So they can judge that to take Puttumattalan, Puthukkudiyiruppu, Valayamadham and Mulivakal the military won't need even one day. You know, it could have been completed in a few hours time, but the fine sentiment that I observed was that the military does not want to hurt the civilians, it's probably they want to safeguard the civilians meeting harm, and therefore they are taking careful steps to ensure that the civilians find a way out of this situation safely and then to deal with the militants who remain to fight with them. So, absolutely careful steps are being taken by the Government, to see that the civilians are brought carefully without harm. That much I am convinced after undergoing hardship and hazardous journey. I am convinced all the step taken by the government to ensure that the civilians are safeguarded and they are brought out safely. Question: Daya Master, it is obvious to us that the Government is in piquant situation--- it sends essential items including foods, medicines, clothes to areas held by its enemies, by a terrorist group knowing that most of these items would be confiscated and used by the terrorist. So this is a unique position which has been acknowledged by the international community… So what are your thoughts on Government continuously supporting the civilians, even who are living in the Tiger held areas, knowing that most of the items sent are confiscated by the LTTE and they use the Government aid to rejuvenate themselves and attack the Government forces…Your comment? Daya Master: It is true that LTTE uses the items sent in by the Government and rejuvenate themselves and then attack the Government that provided them. I think this only happens here with the LTTE. The LTTE confiscates things sent to the civilians by the Government and then attacks the Government that sent them; this happens only here with the LTTE. Question: George Master, LTTE systematically uses the propaganda to gather support of the Tamil Diaspora… They have ensured that the Tamil diaspora are kept at a distance, are kept thousand miles away from the ground… They have created a yearning between the Tamil civilians and their hostages and they are living in their area and the international Tamil people, the Tamil Diaspora are to hide their clandestine activities. Your comment…. George Master: In responding to your question, I think I am treading on a very dangerous area, because the Tamil Diaspora is not very conversant with the ground realities and the latest development for the Tamil people that has metamorphosed during the last few years. Question: Let me interrupt you… Are you saying the Tamil Diaspora is not convinced or does not know the ground realities because the LTTE has created a big wall between the Tamil Diaspora and the civilians who are living in their areas? Am I correct? George Master: You are correct, and in fact, I was trying to arrive at that point, when I said I am treading on dangerous ground, I only meant, the community of people really do not know what is going on in their Homeland and continue to exert their pressure living abroad and say how people are suffering and government forces are killing them and all sorts of things. And therefore they are trying to bring in pressure and all that but if the real ground reality are told to them they will definitely act in a very prudent manner. My message to the Tamil Diasporas is, if you care for the civilian Tamils living here your brothers living here, you must definitely see the inside of this story. You must definitely see the large number of Tamil people who have rejected the LTTE and come into military controlled government area and find out the reason and assert then why they are doing it. They are doing this only because their voice is not well heard, and therefore it is your duty to ascertain the truth. If you care for these people, please do visit this place and see for yourselves the conditions of the displaced people in the IDP centres in Vavuniya and elsewhere. Speak to them, have a good dialogue. Through the process of dialogue and satisfy yourself that the government has been taking all efforts and extra care in bringing out these civilians from the clutches of the LTTE and then provide to them a decent living. In that process, your assistance can be extended to these people through the good office of the Government so that you will be in a position to see them rebuilding themselves and resettling themselves in their natural habitat which is the situation you will appreciate. Question: Suppose Prabhakaran wants to strip off his Tiger stripes, get

rid of his uniform and wants to come back to the civilized world, probably he would like to go live in his old town in pursuit of a lawful occupation, will he be accepted by his own people, will he be accepted by the Tamil people ? George Master: Well it is too late, the people have already rejected the man and now it is too late for him to make such a decision that he should have taken long ago and therefore it is too purposeless. -Asian Tribune- Courtesy: Asiantribune.com