

TIMEZONES COLOMBO TRANSCRIPT

Aragalaya: Inside the People's Struggle in Colombo

a podcast by Isuru Kumarasinghe and Devana Senanayake

[0:74] **King Ratnam**

Po ratam valaya. Let the protests live on.

[2:13] **Anu Madhubhashinie**

I find it interesting that you said toxic relationship. Because I feel like the majority of Sri Lanka – when it comes to, I guess, millennials, and Gen Z – I feel like we are all in toxic relationships with the previous generation, including our parents sometimes.

[2:35] **Anu Madhubhashinie**

I mean, we have this very traumatic experience, all of us have in many ways grown up in trauma, grown up with the war, grown up seeing our uncles getting killed or parents getting punished for the good things they are doing and for being honest and conducting themselves in integrity at work, you know, various things like that. I feel like we have... we have... we are mashed in between this...

[3:12] **Namini Panchala**

Given where I am now compared to where I was before, I had no clue what would happen. What... how things would have been. So, I guess, I really have no clue how things are going to go. But personally, I am just going to observe, to act, to do what I think is right, and see where that takes me; see where my own journey, and the journey of this society as a whole, to see where it takes me.

[4:11] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

Yeah, it was happening you know, the mixing of all the outer pitches and pitching and making some different chords, you know. It's not major/minor, it's different chords. If you carefully listen then... what is Gota [Go] Gama pitch, so you can find... it's a different mix of... There is a coherence, you know... the pitches. Whether they are out... I was listening to that sound, the whole sound. The... that some people make «Kaputa Kak Kak Kak», some people getting into another «Basil Basil Basil Basil» – «Kaputa Kak Kak Kak». *[Mimics the sound of the beat]*. It's like a Tamil movie sometimes, you know, it's...

[5:07] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

Sometimes it's like... «Tada da Taa» Beethoven's symphony, «Kaputa Kak Kak Kak» – «Tada da Taa» – «Basil Basil Basil». There are a lot of sounds there, classic sounds. I was imagining Beethoven and «Kaputa Kak» and everything gets triplets... *[Mimics the sound of the beat]*.

[5:44] **King Ratnam**

You know, from the start of the protests – or the people's movement I'd like to call it – we've seen people being criticized for the ways they protested. To... to bring a horn, you know. Some have chosen to dance, some have chosen to sing, some have chosen to do other

things, some have chosen to go and break a barrier somewhere, you know so... But, you know so when this came up, you know the «Oh, you can't protest like this», my initial reaction was: you know, we as a country, this has happened in... I mean, if my memory is right, if my history is correct, this has never happened in this country, you know. Maybe in the 1950s, there was something like this, but not anything that we know of in the modern day. So, we don't know how to protest, we don't know how to... how a revolution evolves.

[8:00] Ajith Kumarasiri

Hear sounds from the sea you know... it's continuously. So, if you talk, if you make any sound... you have to consider the sea sound. If you use sound equipment or without sound equipment. We have a challenge. The second thing is the sea breeze and the rain. Those sounds were already there before GGG [Gota Go Gama] has started. Then the most important thing is the sound of the people. Then the musicians. Then the musical things and other things. Noises.

[10:20] Dinupa Kodagoda [Devana Senanayake's voice in translation]

As a result of everyone's experiences, we need to be conscious citizens at this moment. We have tolerated a lot as people and cannot tolerate it anymore.

[10:51] King Ratnam

In any revolution, art has played an immense role. And I think that's what art should be doing. Because art, like I mentioned before, we should be creating that mirror for the society to be honestly looking at themselves. And changing art cannot be preachy, we cannot be saying this is right, this is wrong, but we should rather be showing what is going on in a very honest form. And I think music, films, everything should represent that.

[11:28] Namini Panchala

People would often sing songs that have nationalist or racist undertones. They might not even be aware of that because these songs have been, I guess, poured into their heads since they were children. They don't really focus on the lyrics. Or what the song was trying to say. Or the political, social, historical context of the song. We wanted to take it a step further. We wanted to make a change to that and bring forward original compositions as much as possible. And for that, we made sure we worked with a lot of artists.

[12:23] Ajith Kumarasiri

In the middle, a variety of things happen you know, in the middle. The different alternating music, sound excerpts, and a lot of things happening in the middle. So that was... let's go!

[13:11] Namini Panchala

The tone was set by people themselves like the car horns of the people. I mean nobody would give them a pitch to start singing. They would start chanting. There's probably coherence because you hear, you pick up the pitch from other sounds. The government or even certain other authorities in the country who oppress people with their sounds. You have certain institutions, religious institutions as well, playing something on loudspeakers, every evening or every morning or something. It would be very disturbing to other people. It's not something that you ask for. And it was more democratic or like I said, more accommodating [at the protests]. Instead of a certain group of people saying, «Ok, we are the ones who have authority over sound in here».

[15:06] **Anu Madhubhashinie**

Loving the people, despite, I mean, disregarding where they come from, who they really are – their gender, their sexuality, whether it's a minority, the majorities – I think it's, I don't know, I feel like it's a far-fetched dream, but still. We should work ourselves up to move there, I think loving should mainly be about acceptance. We need to tolerate, need to accept, we need to honor. That's what a true leader of Sri Lanka should be doing.

[16:42] **Namini Panchala**

We designed a performance that features children. The children take center stage and they sing about their problems as children. There's no electricity. My mom's at the petrol queue. My dad's at this queue. I don't have friends. I can't go to school anymore. Their problems. With the women from the parade backing them with percussion, and guitars, and other instruments.

[17:59] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

I was thinking, we will do some funeral marches regarding that. Some people brought *mala bera*, and Tamil... percussions and everyday life you know...

[18:21] **Namini Panchala**

And we also used the bell, the church bells, the small.

[18:24] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

Yeah, we got some...

[18:26] **Namini Panchala**

Mala seemo.

[18:27] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

Mala seemo. It's called *mala seemo*. It's a... the bell at what playing the Christians... for the Christian funerals. We got that also. And...

[18:40] **Namini Panchala**

We used *nadeswaran*. Used for Tamil processions, Hindu processions mostly.

[18:48] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

It's a multicultural symbolization you know. Tamil, Hindu and Buddhist, Christian. I was there with a trumpet. I was playing that trumpet. It's close to the impression of me and my God. I used that. It was a mixed kind of thing with several Tamil and Buddhist and Christian [*incomprehensible*]...

[20:47] **King Ratnam**

What these protests and all the people's movement has proven, is that our conscience is still alive, you know, is still intact, thankfully. Yes, our minds might have been corrupted, you know divided, confused, call it what may. Our bodies have been, you know, we've been murdered, tortured, killed, arrested, whatever. But the conscience of this country and the conscience of the people of the mass still remains. And that is where we need to nurture the seed of love and honesty in our respect and understanding.

[22:01] **Ajith Kumarasiri**

I never experienced that kind of sound before GGG [Gota Go Gama].