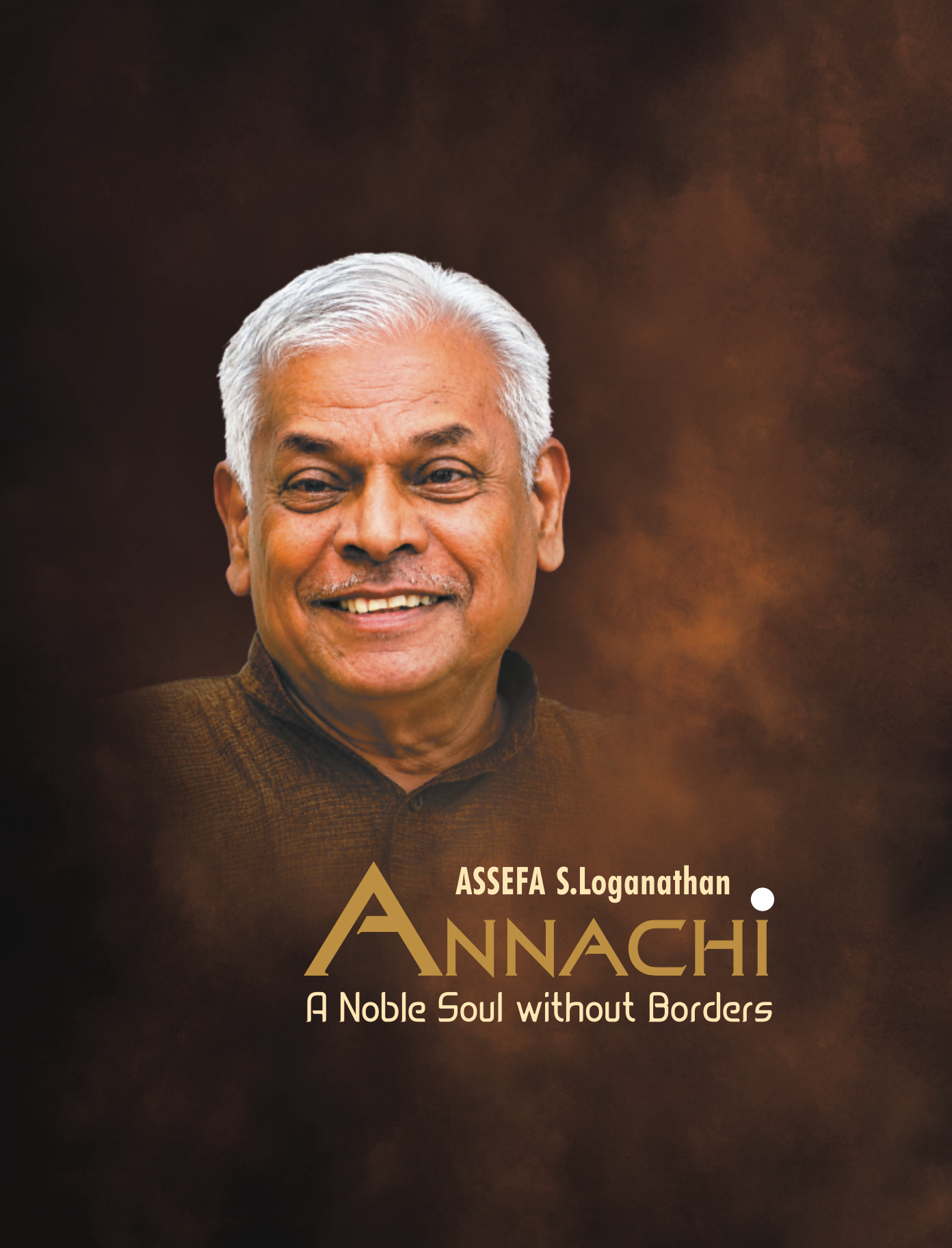
ASSEFA S.Loganathan
ANNACHI
A Noble Soul without Borders



ANNACHI

A Noble Soul without Borders

Reflections from Friends around the World

ANNACHI
A Noble Soul without Borders

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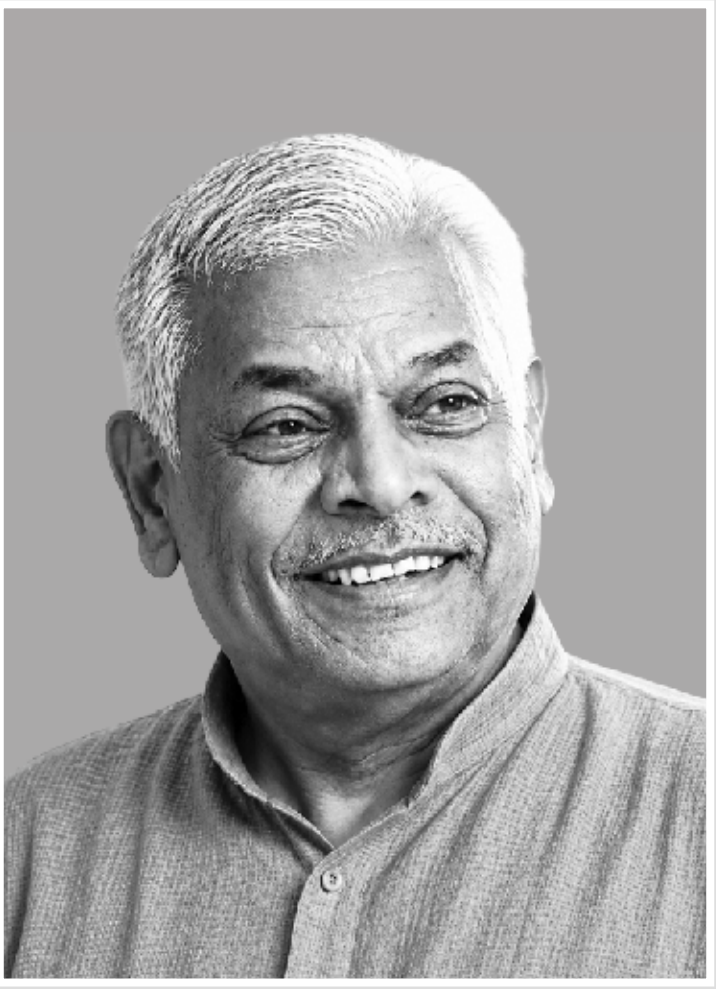


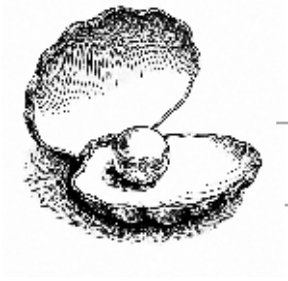
Tribute to Sri. S.Loganathan Annachi

1941 - 2026

Foreword



Sri. Chandrapaul
Chairman - ASSEFA



A Pearl Within the Shell

Some lives do not announce themselves loudly. They emerge quietly, gently, and steadily and over time illuminate the lives of millions of people. Shri Loganathan Annachi was one such soul.

In the early 1960s, he was a young stenographer employed in a government office. To the outside world, he appeared to be an ordinary young man earning a modest livelihood. But within him burned a deeper calling. His thoughts were immersed in Mahatma Gandhi's dream of village reconstruction and in Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya movement, both dedicated to restoring dignity, justice, and opportunity to the poorest and most neglected villagers of India.

***Sri. Chandrapaul** is the Chairman of ASSEFA and a distinguished tax consultant with academic credentials from the University of Madras and the University of Bombay. After a brief period in government service, he established himself in the field of taxation and financial consultancy. A committed Gandhian for over thirty-five years, he comes from an illustrious family known for its contributions to medicine and education and is the nephew of the renowned Gandhian economist J. C. Kumarappa.*

At that time, Keithan, an American missionary who had renounced his American citizenship to join Gandhiji's freedom struggle, was looking for a personal assistant. Krishnammal, the wife of Shri.Jagannathan and herself a towering figure in the Sarvodaya movement, introduced the young Shri. Loganathan to him.

The association with Keithan became a defining influence in his life. It deepened his commitment to Gandhian ideals and shaped his understanding of selfless service. It also rooted him firmly in Vinobaji's philosophy that true social transformation begins with compassion, dignity, and empowerment of India's rural poor.

This conviction led him to Vinobaji's ashram and later to the dacoit-infested Chambal Valley, where he participated in padayatras and movements supporting landless villagers and oppressed communities.

A significant turning point then came through Giovanni Ermiglia, a wealthy Italian professor profoundly inspired by Vinobaji's Bhoodan movement. Moved by the possibility of creating meaningful change in rural India, Giovanni travelled to India in search of a path through which he could contribute to the upliftment of poor peasants.

When he met Shri Jagannathan at Gandhigram, Jagannathan immediately recognised that Shri Loganathanji was the ideal person to guide and accompany him in this mission. Thus was born ASSEFA.

In those early years, Giovanni and Loganathanji travelled endlessly along dusty village roads on motorcycles, working among poor and landless peasants. Their mission was both simple and revolutionary: to transform barren Bhoodan lands into fertile and productive agricultural holdings that could restore livelihoods and dignity to rural families.

What began as a small effort gradually grew into a movement that spread across seven states in India, beginning with Bihar. Around this period, Shri Vijay Mahajan, then a young scholar from Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, also became associated with the work and continues to remain one of the pillars of ASSEFA even today.

From within the shell emerged the pearl with all its lustre in the form of "Annachi". Much revered "Annachi" for countless villagers whose lives were transformed through the many welfare schemes of ASSEFA.

But Annachi's vision extended far beyond land reform. He understood that true rural transformation required education, women's empowerment, livelihoods, technology, dignity, and social harmony to grow together.

At a time when education was still inaccessible in many remote areas, he established more than 116 schools for village children. Long before the concepts became widely recognised, he pioneered self-help groups and community financing initiatives during the early 1980s, becoming a visionary in the field of rural microfinance and women's empowerment.

His work expanded into numerous areas: livelihood and dairy development programs, computer education for marginalized rural communities, direct farmer-led marketing initiatives, renewable and sustainable energy projects, and more than 3,200 community marriages conducted with dignity.

The vision of ASSEFA eventually crossed national boundaries. Friends and well-wishers across many countries responded to Annachi's message of service and human dignity. The light kindled in remote Indian villages eventually reached even the platforms of the United Nations.

Yet, despite all that he achieved, Annachi remained profoundly simple. He never sought recognition, publicity, or personal glorification. There was no trace of self-promotion in him. And perhaps therein lay his true greatness.

From the quiet depth of his simplicity emerged extraordinary strategic vision, fearless innovation, and inclusive philosophy that inspired generations of social workers and organizations across the country.

Many later branches, including Dhan Foundation and SEWA, carry Annachi's mission and vision forward..

This memorial volume is not merely a remembrance of a person. It is a tribute to a life lived fully in the service of others.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed their memories, reflections, and experiences to this volume. Through these pages, Annachi continues to live among us quietly guiding, inspiring, and reminding us that true greatness walks in simplicity.



Acknowledgement



This Memoir on Annachi Loganathan ji is a collection of reflections and recollections from colleagues, stakeholders, donors, supporters, and friends who walked and worked alongside him over the years, both locally and globally.

Their heartfelt and thought-provoking articles reveal the depth of their interactions and connections with Annachi, reaffirming the simplicity and austerity that defined his daily life. Clad in his khadi dhoti, simple shirt, and jhola shoulder bag, he remained unchanged throughout his life. That was Annachi — a man of deep conviction, walking hand in hand with thousands of field colleagues and volunteers in his lifelong pursuit of socio-economic development for marginalized communities, whether in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, or across numerous blocks of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, for nearly 70 years.

Annachi touched the lives of millions of rural women and their families through socio-economic development initiatives. He supported thousands of children in their educational journeys, inspired confidence among young people, motivated countless farmers to adopt

climate-resilient, organic, and natural farming practices, promoted a white revolution through dairy development and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and championed the vision of a self-reliant rural economy. Though Annachi is no longer with us, the light he kindled continues to guide us. His dream will live on through the efforts of his colleagues, co-travellers, supporters, and well-wishers who had the privilege of walking alongside him during different stages of his remarkable journey.

Today, as we honor his memory, we renew our commitment to the values and ideals he lived for. This collection of articles from more than fifty colleagues, supporters, and friends stands as a testament to the profound impact he had on people across regions, generations, and walks of life. It is heartening to see that, irrespective of age, geography, or capacity, each contributor expresses a shared commitment to carrying forward Annachi's vision and mission.

The Editorial Team gratefully acknowledges all those who contributed their articles to this volume. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the many others who, for various reasons, were unable to contribute, and to those whom we could not reach within the available time. We deeply value their affection, memories, and goodwill.

We take this opportunity to record our appreciation and thanks to Ms. Nisha Subramaniam for volunteering to edit the manuscript, translate articles received in Tamil, and review the progress of the publication on a daily basis.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Kumar from SARC and ASSEFA for initiating this process and inviting the three of us to serve on the Editorial Team. He took great efforts to reach out to contributors across the globe, coordinate articles within a limited timeframe, and personally oversee various aspects of the publication process, including work at the press.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at the SIPA Office for their support in organizing the material, reviewing articles, and assisting with corrections and finalization.

The Editorial Team gratefully acknowledges Mr. Arunagiri and his team at Vijaya Enterprises, Sivakasi, for undertaking the design and printing of this memoir on Annachi Loganathan ji with dedication and care.

We hope that this collection will deepen readers' understanding of people-centered development and inspire a renewed commitment to carrying forward Annachi's legacy of self-reliant rural development rooted in Sarvodaya ideals.

May the memory of Annachi continue to inspire and guide us in the years to come.

Panchu along with **Nisha, Arunagiri & Kumar.**
Editorial Team



Dr. Panchaksharam



Nisha Subramaniam



L.Arunagiri



L.Kumar



Preface



L.Kumar
Director - SARC

He walked away from comfort
to walk beside the landless.
He gave up a position
to uphold a purpose.
In every field he touched,
hope took roots.
In every life he reached,
dignity blossomed.
Annachi lives on
in the millions he touched.

Commemorating the Legacy of Annachi – Sri S. Loganathan Ji is a humble effort to celebrate and preserve the life, vision, values, and extraordinary contributions of a remarkable human being who devoted more than seven decades of his life to rural communities, social justice, and the service of humanity.

This publication is not merely a memorial volume. It is a collective expression of gratitude, admiration, affection, and inspiration from countless individuals whose lives were touched by Annachi's presence, guidance, and mission.

L.Kumar *is a development professional with over 25 years of experience in rural livelihoods. Holding a postgraduate degree in Environmental Management from the UK and a Gold Medal in M.Sc. Energy Science, he has worked extensively with development organizations across India. He currently serves as Director of ASSEFA's Sarvodaya Action Research Centre and is a board member of international networks promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy.*

The idea for this commemorative volume emerged from the heartfelt desire of friends, co-workers, development practitioners, Gandhian thinkers, well-wishers, and institutions across India and around the world who wished to record their memories and reflections about a person whose life itself became a movement.

The articles, messages, reflections, and memories gathered here come from people of diverse cultures, professions, and countries. Together, they demonstrate the universal reverence of Annachi's simplicity, compassion, moral leadership, and unwavering commitment to humanity.

Born in a remote village as the fourth child in a humble farming family, Annachi rose through determination, discipline, and deeply rooted values to become a first-generation graduate and one of India's pioneering visionaries of holistic rural development. His early years were shaped by village life, spirituality, hard work, and social sensitivity. As a young volunteer assisting his uncle in selling pooja materials near the Meenakshi Amman Temple, he gradually developed a profound understanding of people, culture, and service.

The defining turning point in his life came through the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave. Inspired by their ideals of equality, non-violence, and social justice, Annachi left his government job at a young age to join the Bhoodan Movement. He actively participated in mobilizing land donations from landlords and distributing them to landless rural families, believing deeply that dignity and justice begin with access to land and livelihood.

What began as a land movement gradually evolved into a much broader mission: the transformation of rural society through collective action and people-centered development.

With the support and encouragement of visionaries such as Giovanni Ermiglia, K.Arunachalam, Richard Rafel Keithan, Krishnammal Jagannathan, and many others, Annachi helped nurture and expand the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) as a continuation of the spirit of the Bhoodan movement. Under his visionary leadership, ASSEFA evolved into one of India's most significant people-centered rural

development movements, empowering communities through participation, self-reliance, and sustainable development.

Annachi believed firmly that meaningful rural transformation must embrace every dimension of human life. Recognizing education as the foundation of social progress, he initiated hundreds of schools in remote villages where educational opportunities scarcely existed. His efforts enabled thousands of rural children—especially girls and first-generation learners—to access education and aspire to a better future.

He was also among the pioneers of the Self-Help Group movement in India, recognizing the transformative strength of women's collective action. Through innovative institutions such as Sarva Jana Seva Kosh, established in 1988, and later Sarvodaya Nano Finance Limited—the first women-owned non-banking finance company—he sought to create financial dignity and economic independence for rural women. These initiatives became powerful instruments of poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and community entrepreneurship.

His vision for rural livelihoods extended to dairy development as well. He established milk producers' companies owned and managed by rural women, integrating training, livestock support, veterinary services, milk procurement, processing, and marketing. Through these efforts, thousands of women achieved sustainable livelihoods and greater social confidence.

At the heart of Annachi's philosophy were the timeless principles of Gomatha, Bhoomatha, and Matha—care for cattle, care for the earth, and care for women and motherhood. He believed that when these three foundational forces are protected and nurtured, villages naturally flourish with harmony, prosperity, and dignity. His approach to development was therefore ecological, humane, spiritual, and deeply community-centered.

Beyond building institutions and programs, Annachi's greatest gift was his ability to inspire people. Over nearly seventy years of service, he influenced countless social workers, professionals, youth, and volunteers across the world to dedicate themselves to humanity and rural reconstruction. He also played a significant role in encouraging

professionals to enter the development sector and helped lay the intellectual and moral foundations for initiatives such as PRADAN, which later emerged as a pioneering institution in professional rural development in India.

Despite his extraordinary achievements, Annachi remained profoundly simple and humble. He lived close to the people, walked alongside villagers, listened patiently, and treated every individual with affection and respect. His life demonstrated that true leadership is rooted not in power or position, but in service, sacrifice, compassion, and moral courage.

This publication stands as a collective remembrance of a life lived with rare purpose and dedication. The tributes and reflections compiled here are not only memories of the past, but guiding lights for the future. They reveal how Annachi touched hearts across boundaries of geography, language, culture, and profession, leaving behind a living legacy that continues to inspire generations.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors from different parts of the world who shared their memories, reflections, experiences, and messages for this volume. Together, their writings form a rich mosaic of Annachi's life and mission—a life that belonged not to one institution or community alone, but to humanity itself.

Though Annachi has physically departed from among us, his ideals, institutions, and spirit of service continue to live in the hearts of millions.

May this publication inspire future generations to walk the path of compassion, justice, simplicity, and selfless service that he so beautifully embodied throughout his life.



Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	18
II.	Every Day is a New Day	28
III.	Voices of Wisdom	29
IV.	Global Annachi - Early International Companions	39
V.	International Friends and Partners	73
VI.	Builders of the ASSEFA Movement	115
VII.	Friends, Well-wishers and Fellow Travelers	167
VIII.	Voices from the Field	223
IX.	Family Reflections	233
X.	The Legacy Lives on	252
XI.	Annachi as a Writer	254

Introduction



L.Kumar

The Life Became a Movement

Shri S. Loganathan was an extraordinary human being whose life and work defy comparison with conventional development leaders. Rarely does one encounter a person who combined simplicity, spiritual depth, intellectual clarity, organizational vision, and lifelong commitment to the poor in such an exceptional way.



He did not live for recognition or personal achievement. He lived for the upliftment of vulnerable rural communities and for the realization of Gandhian ideals in everyday life.

Born into a humble farming family in rural Tamil Nadu, he grew to become one of the pioneering architects of participatory rural development in South Asia.



What made him truly unique was not merely the scale of the institutions he built or the millions of lives touched through ASSEFA, but the spirit with which he carried out his mission — living among the poor, sharing their struggles, and dedicating every stage of his life to restoring dignity, self-reliance, and hope within rural communities.

For nearly six decades, Shri Loganathan inspired thousands of co-workers, village leaders, women, youth, development professionals, and international friends through the power of his personal example. He possessed the rare ability to transform ideals into action, philosophy into institutions, and compassion into sustainable community movements.

To many who worked with him, he was not merely an administrator or development activist, but a moral force and guiding light whose life itself became a message.

Shri S. Loganathan passed away on 28 April 2026 after a lifetime devoted to Gandhian service, Sarvodaya ideals, rural transformation, peace, and human development. His passing marked the end of a remarkable chapter in grassroots development history. Yet his legacy continues through the institutions he founded, the colleagues he guided, the leaders he nurtured, and the millions of lives transformed by his vision and tireless dedication.

1. Early Life and Rural Roots

Born on 15 June 1941 in Puliampatti, a small village near Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Shri Loganathan grew up amidst the realities of rural poverty, uncertain agriculture, and dependence on monsoon rains. These early experiences profoundly shaped his understanding of village life and the struggles of farming communities.

He began his schooling in the village and later pursued higher education in Madurai, completing his graduation in History and post-graduation in Diplomatic History of Europe. He also underwent training in Social Work, Rural Management, and Labour Management, which equipped him with strong organizational and administrative skills.

2. Influences That Shaped His Life

Although he briefly served in government employment, his life took a decisive turn when he became associated with the Bhoodan Movement initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. The movement, based on voluntary land gift and nonviolent social transformation, deeply influenced him. It introduced him to the philosophy of Sarvodaya — "the welfare of all" — and convinced him that meaningful development must begin with the poorest and most marginalized sections of society.

Several remarkable personalities shaped his worldview and character.

Among them were Krishnammal and Jagannathan, renowned Sarvodaya leaders who dedicated their lives to land rights and rural justice. Equally influential was Benedict Ralph Richard Keithahn, the American missionary whose humanitarian approach strengthened Loganathan's conviction that service to the poor is the highest form of human purpose.

Another important influence was Professor Giovanni Ermiglia of Italy, whose philosophical and spiritual insights profoundly inspired him.



From these mentors and experiences, Shri Loganathan embraced a principle that remained central throughout his life:

"Live simply, remain with the poor, and make life meaningful through service."

3. Founding of ASSEFA — A Turning Point

This philosophy took institutional form in 1968, during Gandhi's Centenary Year, when Shri Loganathan and Professor Giovanni Ermiglia jointly established the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA).

What began as an effort to rehabilitate landless peasants on Bhoodan lands gradually evolved into one of India's most influential grassroots development movements.

As Secretary and Executive Director, Shri Loganathan provided visionary leadership to ASSEFA for several decades. Under his guidance, the organization grew from a small rural experiment into a vast people-centered movement that shaped rural development thinking in India and internationally.

4. Evolution of Development Thought and Action

1960s — Fighting Poverty and Hunger

During the 1960s, rural India faced severe poverty and food insecurity. Shri Loganathan focused on bringing donated Bhoodan lands under cultivation through cooperative farming initiatives known as Sarva Seva Farms.

Nearly fifty cooperative farms emerged during this period, helping landless families secure livelihoods, dignity, and food security.

1970s — Community Mobilization and Social Awakening

In the 1970s, witnessing widespread illiteracy, inequality, and social oppression in villages, he shifted his emphasis toward community mobilization and village action committees.

His vision moved beyond charity-based development toward collective participation, social awareness, and people's empowerment.





1980s — Education and Professionalizing Development

The 1980s marked a major expansion in ASSEFA's educational and institutional activities.

Shri Loganathan firmly believed that education was essential for social transformation, especially among children from poor rural families. Under his leadership, more than 400 schools were established in rural areas, benefiting tens of thousands of children — many of them first-generation learners.

These schools brought education to villages where no formal educational facilities had previously existed and opened pathways for socially and economically marginalized communities.

Recognizing the need for professionally trained development workers, Shri Loganathan also helped establish PRADAN during the 1980s to bring qualified professionals into the rural development sector.

Through this initiative, many young social workers, grassroots leaders, and development practitioners were inspired to dedicate themselves to community development.

Even today, many practitioners across India acknowledge that their understanding of participatory rural development was deeply shaped by Shri Loganathan and the ASSEFA movement.

1990s — Self-Help Groups and Community Institutions

In 1989–90, at the invitation of the Government of Tamil Nadu through the Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation, ASSEFA initiated one of the earliest Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Projects in the then South Arcot district, covering four blocks with its base at Kallakurichi.

The project promoted Self-Help Groups among marginalized rural women. Within six months, more than 10,000 groups had been mobilized through social empowerment initiatives, thrift and savings programs, microcredit systems, village industries, dairy activities, and agro-based livelihood clusters.

Supported initially by IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), ASSEFA expanded these efforts through integrated village development programs and child sponsorship initiatives.

Over time, the organization broadened SHG promotion and networking across Tamil Nadu, introducing community-based finance systems, mutual funds, nano-finance initiatives, and livelihood support programs for vulnerable families.

The dairy development experiments during this period also paved the way for Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and women-led rural enterprises across the state.

Recognizing a growing crisis of leadership in rural society, Shri Loganathan concentrated during the 1990s on nurturing grassroots leadership and strengthening community institutions.

More than 165 community-based organizations with legal structures were promoted in areas such as education, women's empowerment, microfinance, agriculture, health, natural resource management, and rural enterprise development.

Village-level Nidhi Foundations and people's institutions enabled rural communities to mobilize and manage their own resources, strengthening self-governance and collective responsibility.

2000s — Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment

During the 2000s, when migration, rural distress, and widening economic inequality became major concerns, Shri Loganathan focused on sustainable livelihoods rooted in agriculture, livestock development, women's participation, and community finance.

Area-level credit unions were promoted, and rural communities were connected with mainstream financial institutions and development opportunities.

ASSEFA's integrated livelihood programs significantly improved the economic conditions of poor households across several Indian states.

Through these efforts, Shri Loganathan positively impacted the lives of more than one million vulnerable families.



2010s — Peace, Secularism, and Environmental Sustainability

The following decade reflected his growing concern for governance, communal harmony, and environmental sustainability.

ASSEFA promoted local democratic institutions, natural resource management, inter-community dialogue, and peace initiatives.

Mass marriages involving couples from different religions and communities symbolized his commitment to secularism, social equality, and peaceful coexistence. By this time, he had helped organize mass weddings for 2,984 couples.

He also recognized emerging challenges such as environmental degradation, malnutrition, and drinking water scarcity.

Through ASSEFA, he initiated watershed development programs, large-scale tree cultivation, promotion of traditional foods, and community drinking water systems benefiting lakhs of rural families.

Tree cultivation and watershed activities expanded across more than 15,000 acres, while community RO drinking water systems provided safe water access to nearly 500,000 families in over 100 locations across Tamil Nadu.

5. Integrating Spirituality with Development

In the 2020s Shri Loganathan increasingly emphasized the integration of spirituality with development.

He believed sustainable social transformation required not only economic progress, but also moral, cultural, and spiritual strength within communities.

With this vision, he promoted the Annapoorani Temple and Lord Muruga Temple as spaces that could bring communities together — especially women — and deepen social participation and collective belonging.

These initiatives reflected his belief that spirituality, culture, and community life could strengthen development work and social harmony.

6. Building Global Solidarity and Gandhian Networks

Through Friends of ASSEFA networks in Europe and elsewhere, Shri Loganathan built meaningful bridges between rural Indian communities and international supporters, spreading the values of sharing, compassion, and nonviolence across cultures.

The ASSEFA experience became an important field of learning for scholars, researchers, and Gandhian thinkers studying Sarvodaya philosophy, participatory development, and community empowerment.

His lifelong commitment to peace and nonviolence also contributed to international advocacy efforts that encouraged the United Nations to declare 2001–2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

7. A Legacy of Service and Human Transformation

Loganathan ji remains a rare example of a development leader and social architect who chose simplicity over power, service over recognition, and community welfare over personal gain.

Though he passed away on 28 April 2026, his legacy continues through the institutions he built, the leaders he nurtured, the professionals he inspired, and the millions of rural people whose lives were transformed by his vision of dignity, self-reliance, peace, and collective progress.

His life will continue to inspire future generations to carry forward the mission of Sarvodaya — the welfare of all.



Everyday is a

New Day

Today is the first day of a new year.
Many such days have come and gone.
They arrived with hope and joy —
and then quietly vanished.

I travel back through memory.
Many sacred souls crossed my path,
but only a few carried me on their shoulders.

The Eden garden we began together
has grown lush and green.
Yet some parts are now covered with thorny bushes.
The clearing continues —
weeding, watering, patiently tending.

I still remember the sacred souls.
Some remain,
some have gone.
Those who left now call to me, asking me to follow.

I stand caught between their grasp,
neither in despair nor in joy.
Tears roll down my cheeks.

I wait —
for the next new day,
in a new year.

- S. Loganathan



Voices of Wisdom

1. Smt. Krishnammal Jeganathan
2. Dr. S.Pandian



Loganathan - A Spiritual Luminary

III
1



Smt. Krishnammal Jeganathan

The greatness of Loganathan Annachi is difficult to describe fully. It cannot be measured by what he achieved alone. His greatness lay in the fact that he lived his life without causing harm to anyone and dedicated himself entirely to service.

In my early years of social work, I came to know Annachi through our respected leader, Shri S. M. Natarajan. From the very beginning, he was gentle and approachable. What struck me most was that his thinking was always clear, practical, and deeply humane.

Smt. Krishnammal Jagannathan *is an eminent Gandhian social reformer and land rights activist whose lifelong work has empowered thousands of marginalized rural families. A recipient of numerous national and international honors, she continues to inspire generations through her unwavering commitment to justice, nonviolence, and sustainable rural development.*



When our Sarvodaya movement was facing many challenges, Annachi stood firmly by us. He worked tirelessly to strengthen the movement and devoted himself wholeheartedly to constructive action. Whatever task he undertook, he approached it with sincerity and commitment. Even when difficulties arose, he never lost his calm. His quiet determination became a source of strength for many of us.

Annachi believed that Sarvodaya was not merely an idea but a way of life. He often said that true development should reach the poorest person and that real progress must be measured by the well-being of those who are most marginalized. He lived this conviction every day.

There is a saying:

"The fruit of learning is humility;
the fruit of humility is wisdom."

Annachi embodied this truth. Though he possessed immense knowledge and experience, he remained humble throughout his life. His humility drew people to him and enabled him to work closely with communities across generations.

One particular incident remains vivid in my memory.

A Christian missionary once approached him and asked why he continued to work among poor people with such dedication. Annachi replied that serving the poor was itself a form of worship. If one truly understood the suffering of another human being and acted to alleviate it, there was no greater spiritual practice.

That simple response revealed the essence of his life. For Annachi, spirituality was not separate from service; it was expressed through service.

Among those who strengthened the Sarvodaya movement, Annachi, S. M. Natarajan, Balagurusamy, and Sankaracharya Adigalar were important pillars. Together they helped expand Sarvodaya activities and brought Gandhian values into practical action.

Inspired by Vinoba Bhave, Annachi worked tirelessly to carry the ideals of land reform, village development, and human dignity across Tamil Nadu. Wherever he worked, people felt that development was not something imposed from outside but something they themselves could shape and own.

I also remember his close association with Jayaprakash Narayan. Through that relationship, he gained a deeper understanding of social transformation and people's movements. These influences enriched his work and strengthened his commitment to justice and equality.

One day, while we were discussing the future of rural development, I asked him what kind of society he hoped to create.

His response was simple:
He wanted a society where no one was left behind.

For nearly sixty years, through ASSEFA, he worked relentlessly to make that vision a reality. He believed that true service meant creating opportunities for people to stand on their own feet with dignity.



What impressed me most about Annachi was not merely his achievements but his character. He possessed extraordinary patience, remarkable simplicity, and a rare ability to bring people together. He never sought personal recognition. Instead, he quietly built institutions, nurtured leaders, and empowered communities.

Today, though he is no longer physically with us, his presence remains alive in the countless lives he touched, the institutions he strengthened, and the values he upheld.

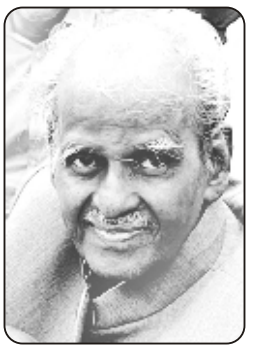
For those of us who had the privilege of knowing him, Annachi remains a shining example of how spirituality and service can become one.

ASSEFA and the Sarvodaya movement will continue to bear the imprint of his life and work for generations to come.

“May the lamp he lit continue to illuminate our path.”



The Annachi I Knew



Dr. S.Pandian

I first came to know Loganathan Annachi through the Gandhian and Sarvodaya movements that shaped much of rural Tamil Nadu in the years after Independence. Those were years filled with idealism, village reconstruction, land reform, and the dream of building a more humane society.

Annachi entered that world quietly.

Born into a simple family, he could easily have lived an ordinary life. But after the death of his mother, something in him changed. Leaving behind familiar comforts, he joined the Gram Rajya Nirmana Sangam at Vathalakundu and began working alongside Gandhian leaders such as Jagannathan and Krishnammal. What began as clerical work soon became a life of total commitment to rural people.

Sri S. Pandianji *is a distinguished Gandhian thinker, scholar, and social activist who has devoted his life to promoting Gandhian philosophy among younger generations. A close associate of eminent national leaders and Gandhian stalwarts, including R. Venkataraman and Nirmala Deshpande, he has held several important positions in social and academic institutions. An accomplished author of more than fifty books, he relinquished a successful legal career to dedicate himself fully to the service and propagation of Gandhian ideals.*



Very early, others recognized something rare in him — an unusual sincerity, organizational brilliance, and the ability to connect deeply with ordinary villagers. He was sent to live among rural communities, understand their needs, and help organize collective action. There were times when he himself had no money to eat. Villagers quietly arranged for one family each day to feed him. Such was the trust he inspired.

The Bhoodan movement transformed his life further. Walking from village to village, he helped secure land donations for the landless poor. He believed land was not merely property, but dignity, survival, and freedom. Krishnammal herself developed deep affection and respect for him after witnessing his dedication and integrity in this work.

But Annachi was never confined to one role.

He wrote humorous essays in simple Tamil that made readers laugh while also making them think. He staged plays, directed them, and acted in them himself. He helped establish the Sarvodaya Literary Farm in Madurai, which soon became an important intellectual and cultural space. Much of its success came from his administrative skill, sharp judgment, and instinctive understanding of people.

What astonished me most was his ability to think simultaneously like an activist, organizer, teacher, economist, and dreamer.

Later, through ASSEFA, he helped expand rural development efforts across India. What began in Tamil Nadu spread gradually to Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and beyond. He constantly experimented with new systems of administration, cooperative finance, education, agriculture, and village self-reliance. He believed institutions must remain alive — capable of changing according to people's needs.

He traveled tirelessly across countries raising support for rural communities in India. He spoke in churches, public meetings, and gatherings in places whose languages he did not even know. Yet somehow, through sincerity and conviction, he moved people deeply.

I still remember him narrating one such experience in Africa with great laughter. Unable to understand the language around him, he relied on gestures and a few memorized words. A large woman in the audience stood up and spoke passionately; Annachi confessed later that he was frightened because he could not understand whether she was angry or supportive. Only later did he realize she had been collecting donations enthusiastically for the movement. We laughed about it for a long time.

Humor never left him.
Neither did courage.

I witnessed this courage many times — in confrontations with bureaucracies, financial institutions, and powerful organizations. Annachi was unwavering when people's dignity was at stake. Once, when a funding organization objected to creating a community-owned rural financial structure, even at the risk of losing enormous foreign support, he refused to compromise. "Money is not important," he said. "People's progress is important."

That was Annachi.

He believed institutions existed for people — never the other way around.

Even in difficult negotiations with government officials, there was always clarity, honesty, and often humor. He could challenge authority fiercely without losing his humanity. He carried no arrogance, even while accomplishing extraordinary things.

What made him unique was not merely his efficiency or vision, but the spirit in which he worked. He never behaved like a man seeking power, recognition, or personal success. He lived simply, worked relentlessly, and trusted deeply in collective wisdom.

Many development projects across India speak today of participation, self-help groups, cooperative finance, decentralized planning, and community ownership. Annachi practiced these ideas decades before they became fashionable language in policy circles.

To many villagers, he was not an administrator or activist. He was simply "our Annachi."

A man who listened.

A man who stood with them.

A man who believed they deserved dignity.

When I think of him now, I do not remember a single achievement alone. I remember movement — constant movement toward people, toward justice, toward hope.

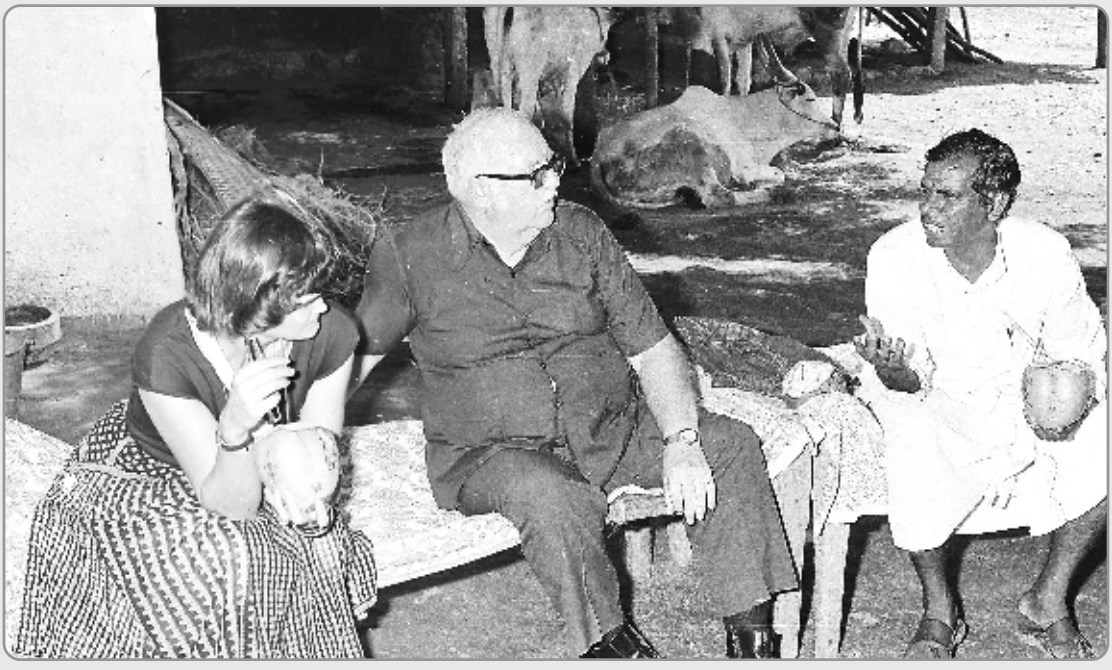
Men like Annachi do not merely build institutions.

They build courage in others.

And long after they are gone, that courage continues to work quietly in the world.









Global Annachi

Early International Companions

1. Chris Wilde
2. Steve Shepelwich
3. Ronald Léger
4. Itala Ricaldone
5. Tim Broadhead
6. Ivan Nutbrown
7. Yvon Poirier
8. Franco and Rosanna
9. Elena Camino and Franco



A Gandhian Entrepreneur - Steward

IV
1

Chris Wilde



Annachi meaning elder brother in Tamil, neatly describes the relationship I had with Loganathanji. He was 43 when I first met him in Paris in 1981. I was a 25-year-old student and clearly the "Thambi," the younger brother.

At the time, I was pondering what to do after graduation and had contacted ASSEFA through a circuitous route, which eventually led to an invitation to meet Annachi and Giovanni in Paris to discuss the possibility of working in India.

I travelled to Paris on the boat train from London and went to their hotel. Annachi, dressed in khadi, stayed somewhat in the background and at first

Chris Wilde, *a British citizen, worked with ASSEFA between 1981 and 1984 and again between 1987 and 1989. He is now retired after a career in International Development financial management with the Worldwide Fund for Nature, the International Rescue Committee, the International Institute for Environment and Development and Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor, and currently works as a volunteer with the Citizens Advice Bureau.*

appeared a little detached. However, his interest was piqued after I mentioned that I had spent a year in Madurai district doing research for my degree and had studied Tamil. I tried a few faltering words with him in Tamil.

Later that year, I left for India, engaged by ASSEFA as a "Social Worker," without quite knowing what to expect.

The ASSEFA head office was then an old-fashioned two-storey building on Power House Road in Madurai, opposite the single-track railway line coming in from coastal Ramnad. The office was a beehive of activity, overseen by the indefatigable Mr. Abraham, with English and Tamil typewriters clattering onto carbon-copied sheets and correction fluid flowing copiously — especially in my case. Workers were refreshed regularly with chai and Madurai coffee.

The office was full of personalities. The accountant, Mr. Periyasamy, was ably assisted by others, including Mr. Santhanam and Nagarajan. Also in the office were Ms. Vasantha, who was in charge of the schools, Mr. Chandrasekhar, and Mr. Vasimalai, a double graduate in Agriculture and Business Administration. Later we were joined by Mr. Sundaresan, a thinker and development adviser, and Mr. Jothiramalingam, who had worked in dairy development in Gujarat.

I observed that somehow Annachi always found time to build relationships with all his staff.
Annachi travelled frequently to project sites in Tamil Nadu and other states, and occasionally abroad, but he commanded complete respect whenever he was present. He ran the head office, supervised the project managers, and liaised with ASSEFA's governing team — including Giovanni — as well as donors. He also received many visitors, and each visit invariably involved trips to the project sites.

Annachi invited me on many of these visits, which generally involved long journeys to isolated Bhoodan farms, often returning late to Madurai. During these journeys, he would discuss the issues facing ASSEFA and tell stories about managing the hobbyhorses of donors who viewed ASSEFA as a testing ground for their ideas. He once told me how he had ducked beneath his desk to avoid meeting an irate donor demanding an overdue report.

At times I challenged him and proposed my own ideas, many of which he would gently deconstruct and quietly set aside.

I came to understand him as a Gandhian entrepreneur-steward. His entrepreneurship often began with the question: "Why not?" He looked at what people needed and what they were capable of doing, and especially encouraged younger people to think creatively. He was a natural economist, frequently asking people about the prices of commodities and their wages.

As a steward, he was both caretaker and micro-manager. He once told me, "Things succeed not only because of strategy, but because people take care of the details."

Annachi was also deeply politically aware — not only of India's broader social and historical realities, but also of personalities, organisational tensions, and institutional risks. He carefully assessed the pitfalls in implementing ASSEFA's programmes and understood well the psychology of power, motivation, and weakness.

This was not Machiavellianism so much as pragmatism. Nothing would distract him from the goal of helping the rural poor.

After I arrived, Annachi wondered what work to assign me. My first task was to assist with a village survey in the hamlets surrounding Uchapatti in connection with setting up a paper industry. Later, he teamed me with an experienced Gandhian, Mr. Sethuramalingam.
Together, we initiated various development schemes in a small village called Jari Usilampatti, around 40 kilometres south of Madurai. These included agricultural loans, a silk programme, tree planting, a small shoe shop, and a health programme.

While some of these activities had positive impact, success was mixed. Annachi deliberately took a back seat but monitored progress carefully without rescuing us. In doing so, he allowed me to learn an important lesson: you cannot do development for people — they themselves must lead it.

With Annachi's support, I became involved in additional development work, including the nascent health programme and the new area development projects. I spent three rich years with ASSEFA before leaving India in 1984 due to new visa regulations limiting residence. Fortunately, I was able to return again in 1987 and 1988 for six months each time.

Later, Annachi asked me to document ASSEFA's work in a book titled Community Centred Approach to Rural Development. It was a valuable opportunity to study the

detail behind the programmes and also to observe ASSEFA's work in North India.

Back in the UK, Annachi and Giovanni encouraged the formation of Friends of ASSEFA — later renamed Action Village India — in 1988 by supporters inspired by ASSEFA's work. Annachi visited us during our first year to encourage our practical engagement with India, and perhaps also to steer us away from becoming merely a club that talked about India.

Since 1989, I have visited ASSEFA occasionally. Each time I was warmly welcomed by Annachi and the ASSEFA family, and each time I was amazed by ASSEFA's continuing progress. We were also fortunate to welcome Annachi to the UK on several occasions. Whenever he visited, he displayed the same gentleness, kindness, and consideration toward friends and family.

In 2018, I travelled to India with my son Tom, then 17 years old. Annachi took great care to speak with him about the work and about his own hopes for the future. He was reflective and open in his conversations, discussing the future of Tamil Nadu, the risks of desertification, and the possible alternatives.

He suggested that beyond services, Tamil Nadu's future lay particularly in automobiles and textiles. He also spoke about the rapid transformations taking place across the state: improved transport, the spread of motorcycles, people purchasing land near towns for ribbon development, and the growing pattern of dual residence between village and town life.

He believed that investment in infrastructure, education, and international partnerships would be essential for Tamil Nadu's continued development.

Annachi was always looking ahead — always with hope, and always with a plan.

And I think that remains his challenge to all of us.



Listening and Learning comes before Action



Steven Shepelwich

Sri Loganathan Ji first came into my life in early 1987, when I was a university student serving as a rural development intern with ASSEFA. While many details of those first meetings have faded over time, the impression he left on me never did. In many ways, the lessons he shared during those few months shaped the course of my life and work over the next forty years.

One of the first things Annachi told me was simple and direct. He said, "You are a young college student from America, full of ideas, so of course you want to change the world. But there is nothing you can do here in six months except learn. Later in life, you can do good for others."

At the time, those words felt freeing, though I may not have fully understood their wisdom. Annachi gently helped me see that listening and learning must come before action. He opened doors for me to observe village life, meet

Steven Shepelwich *from the United States is a long-time supporter of Action Village India and a well-wisher of ASSEFA. Currently serving in the U.S. Federal banking system. His first experience in the development sector was with ASSEFA over 40 years ago, soon after college, an association that has continued to inspire his interest in community development and social change.*

people, and understand the work of ASSEFA from the ground up. Without realizing it then, he was teaching me both humility and a new way of learning.

One memory from that time has remained with me more vividly than almost any other. Annachi took me to visit an Adivasi community in a remote area near Wardha. The villagers had recently settled on Bhoodan land — land that had been donated for the care and development of landless families with ASSEFA's support.

The drive seemed endless. We left the main road, travelled along narrow dirt paths, crossed cattle tracks, and finally drove over open fields. By the time we arrived, it was dark. In a large clearing surrounded by trees, villagers sat together in a wide semicircle on old quilts, waiting for us. Lanterns lit the gathering.

We sat among them while village elders spoke about their history, struggles, and hopes for the future. Then Annachi began to speak.

He first thanked them for welcoming us. Then he asked, "If I came to stay here, would you feed me?"

The villagers answered yes, of course.

He then asked, "Would you feed my son if he came?"

Again, they said yes.

"What if my whole family came to stay? Would you help feed and house all of us?"

At that point, people began looking at one another. Some laughed nervously. The questions suddenly felt more serious.

Then Annachi looked up at the night sky. Pointing to the scattered stars above us, he said, "Right now, you are like the stars spread across the sky. But if you come together, work together, and care for one another, you will rise together like the sun in the east."

I still remember the silence that followed. People were surprised by his words, but they understood his message. He believed deeply in the power of people working together for the common good.

Looking back now, I can see that spirit throughout the work of ASSEFA. It was never only about providing services. It was about helping people build strength together.



Another lesson Annachi impressed on idea of Sarvodaya — the upliftment of all, beginning with those in greatest need. His attention was always directed toward people living on the margins, especially landless families and those facing discrimination.

I remember walking with him through a village in Tamil Nadu where he pointed out a water tap used only by upper-caste families. He showed me children from a Dalit community and explained that they were not allowed to drink there. For Annachi, development was never abstract. It was about dignity, fairness, and ensuring that those excluded from society were included in its benefits.

There was also a simplicity in the way he lived that left a lasting impression on me. I remember once standing beside a train with him while waiting to board. Somehow our conversation turned to travel. I thought I was travelling lightly, carrying only a few clothes, toiletries, and some books. Annachi smiled and showed me his own small bag. He carried only one extra change of clothes and a few basic items.

He explained that he trusted people. If he needed something more, those around him would help. It was a small moment, but it revealed something important about him. His simplicity was not an act. It reflected trust in others and freedom from unnecessary wants.

After my internship ended, I did not see Annachi again for nearly forty years. Over time, these lessons became more than memories; they informed my life and work and became standards I tried to live by. What began as his advice to "learn now" gradually became a commitment to "do good for others."

This February 2026, I was fortunate to return to ASSEFA and see Annachi again for the first time since 1987. I felt nervous before the visit. I wondered whether the man I remembered would match the memory I had carried for so many years.

The reality surpassed my memory in every way.

Even while facing serious health challenges, Annachi remained full of ideas and energy. He spoke to me about creating pensions for small-scale milk producers, strengthening education in ASSEFA schools, and developing new models of holistic rural development. He talked about returning to village life because that was where he found both rest and inspiration.

What struck me most was that he never stopped learning, imagining, or building. ASSEFA itself had grown into a network of more than 150 organizations working together toward a shared purpose. That growth reflected Annachi's lifelong belief that real change begins by listening carefully to people, understanding their needs, and helping communities create solutions together.

Annachi was a visionary, but he was also deeply practical. He dreamed boldly, yet spent his life turning those dreams into action.

I count myself fortunate to have known him. And even though my time with him was relatively brief, his example continues to guide me, as I know it will continue guiding many others for generations to come.



The Greatest Community Builder

IV
3



Ronald Léger

Remembering My Dear Brother Loga

Dear colleagues and friends of our beloved "Annachi,"whom I continued to call "My Dear Brother Loga," just as he continued to call me "Ron."

Let us remember that Annachi remains with us—living actively in our hearts, our thoughts, and our actions.

As a humble Canadian and international cooperation worker, I had the extraordinary privilege not only of working with Loga, but also of occasionally assisting him, constantly learning from him, and most importantly, becoming his friend.

In my eyes, he remains one of the greatest community-builders the world has ever known.

Ronald LEGER *is a distinguished leader in international development, he spent over 30 years advancing international cooperation and supporting grassroots organizations across the Global South. His work emphasized partnership among equals, institutional strengthening, women's empowerment, and sustainable social development.*

This is not an exaggeration. It is my deepest conviction, grounded in concrete and visible results: the uplifting of communities on a scale rarely witnessed in human history.

The accomplishments of ASSEFA represent far more than the success of an organization. They constitute a historic, community-driven transformation that changed the lives of millions of Dalit families and continues to inspire hope among countless others around the world.

What always distinguished Loga's approach was that it was never based on pity or charity toward Dalits. Quite the opposite. From its earliest beginnings, ASSEFA was rooted in profound respect, mutual dignity, encouragement, and participation. Its spirit was dynamic yet deeply collaborative and humane.

I had the great honor of working alongside Loga during the formative years of several important community-based initiatives:

* the ASSEFA educational system, which began with kindergarten teacher training and has since expanded to the university level;

* the ASSEFA NANO microcredit banking system, increasingly led by women;

* and the early discussions that later evolved into the Community-Based Exchange network.

I remember especially our conversations about the paternalistic and restrictive banking systems then available to the poor. One evening, our shared frustration led to an all-night discussion that eventually contributed to the foundations of the NANO initiative.

Behind all these remarkable achievements stood Loga's spirit of humility, personal respect, and unwavering faith in the capacity of communities to uplift themselves.

I often teased him about his "diplomatic touch," yet ASSEFA itself became living proof that meaningful and transformative change is possible—not only for Dalits across eight Indian states, but for oppressed and marginalized peoples everywhere.

While planning a final visit to India, I exchanged emails with Loga in early 2025.

In his final reply to me, dated April 9, 2025, he wrote:

“I live in a village, visiting neighbouring villages, doing learning and delearning… October to January are the ideal months… Ten days is too short. Plan for a month.”

I wrote back asking where exactly he was staying and how best to reach him.

I never received another reply.

Deep down, I sensed that his health may already have been failing.

In some ways, Loga reminded me of my father. Deep within themselves, both carried the spirit of artists who navigated hard realities with the optimism of poets. Perhaps that is why I feel, with deep emotion, that their spirits are now united in ways beyond our understanding.


Central Bank of India
INAUGURATES THE PROJECT
FOR FINANCING LAND LESS POOR





The Talent Nurturer



Itala Ricaldone

In 1984, I had the opportunity to meet Giovanni Ermiglia and hear, directly from him, the early story of ASSEFA's beginnings. Giovanni spoke with deep gratitude about a young Indian student, Loganathan ji, who had supported him in his efforts to start a small rural development initiative through microcredit. Giovanni had wanted to provide small loans to a few farmers who had received barren Bhoodan land that had remained uncultivated for many years. The farmers knew that if they failed to cultivate the land, they would eventually lose it. Unsure whether anything could grow on such dry terrain, they were hesitant to accept the loans. In their honesty, they did not want to take money for something they feared might fail. Eventually, however, they agreed — mainly because they did not wish to disappoint Giovanni.

In 1995, I travelled to Tamil Nadu with Dr. Zunin, Giovanni's nephew, and was deeply moved by the extreme poverty we witnessed in many villages. Families

Itala Ricaldone *is the Founder and President of ASSEFA Genova, Italy. A long-standing friend and supporter of ASSEFA, she has played a key role in fostering solidarity between Italian supporters and rural communities in India through her commitment to social justice and grassroots development.*



lived in huts made of branches and leaves, often with almost nothing inside except a small fireplace. The first schools started through the efforts of Vasantha were similarly modest — simple huts with only a blackboard. In both the villages and the schools, everyone sat on the floor.

One image remains especially vivid in my mind: Loganathan ji sitting on the ground among a group of village women, listening carefully as he asked them what they felt they could do to improve their lives. During one such meeting, a woman stood up and said quietly that perhaps she could rear a cow. Immediately, Loganathan ji encouraged the women present to form a small group for dairy activity, assuring them that ASSEFA would support them with a loan. It is remarkable to think that from such humble and practical conversations emerged, years later, five modern and automated dairy plants.

This was where Loganathan ji's intuition and commitment became truly visible. Together with a few friends, he arranged for a well to be dug so that water could be used to irrigate the land. Two years later, he was able to show Giovanni green and cultivated fields where once there had been only dry earth — something neither the farmers nor Giovanni himself had imagined possible. Slowly, a model of

development rooted in trust, participation, and local initiative began to grow and spread across larger communities.

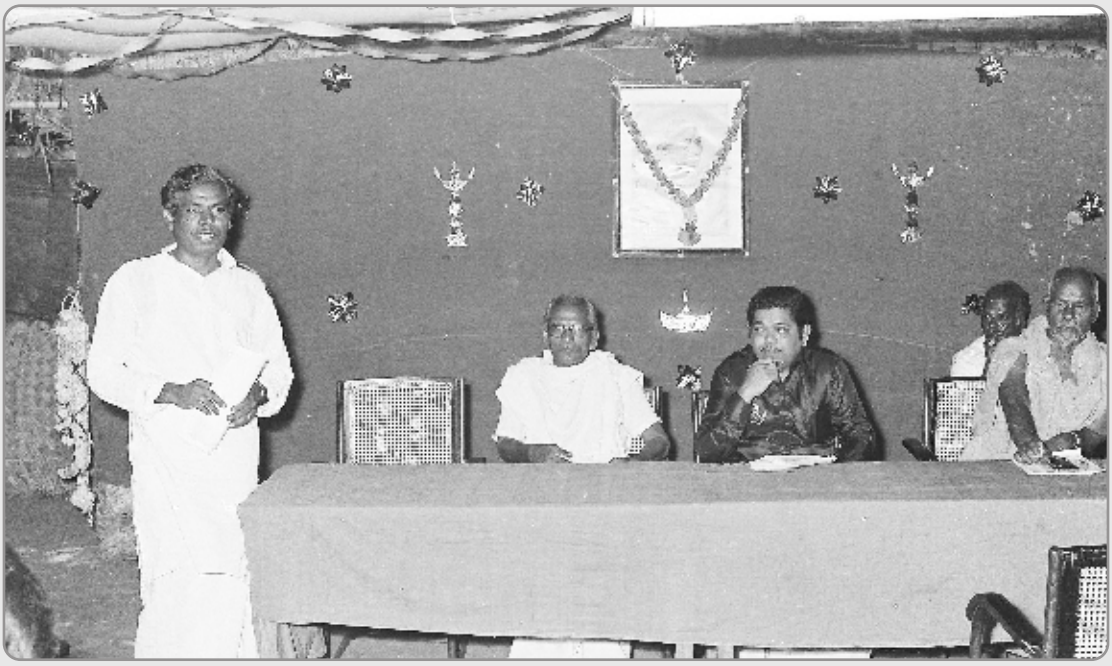
During our visits, Loganathan ji always made himself available to accompany us and patiently explain ASSEFA's activities. Dressed simply in his dhoti, he carried himself with great humility and warmth. He had a quiet humour, a poetic way of speaking, and a lightness that made even difficult realities easier to understand.

Over the years, Loganathan ji visited Italy several times. In 1991, he addressed students at the Istituto Arecco and spoke about "A Barefoot Revolution on the Tracks of Gandhi." Later, in 2000, he delivered a talk on sustainable development at the Banca di Genova e San Giorgio. A local newspaper, reflecting on his speech, observed that "bringing together the head, the heart, and the stomach is difficult, but it is the true basis of sustainable development."

Loganathan ji often reminded people that while villages might lack material comforts, "we are all children of God, and God possesses nothing for Himself, but only to give to others." For him, the first step in development was always to help people regain dignity through sharing, participation, and collective responsibility. Village assemblies — where everyone, including women and those once considered "untouchable," could participate equally — were therefore central to ASSEFA's approach.

One of Loganathan ji's greatest strengths was his ability to encourage people to become active participants in change. This applied not only to villagers, but also to professionals, volunteers, and supporters from many backgrounds. He had a rare gift for identifying talent and gently guiding people toward meaningful contribution across agriculture, crafts, education, health, and community development.

Looking back now, what remains most striking is not only the scale of what ASSEFA achieved, but the deeply human way in which it grew — patiently, collectively, and always rooted in dignity and trust.

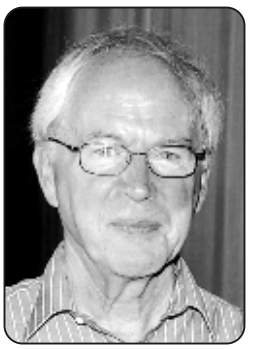



2007



Annachi : A Source of hope for many

IV
5



Tim Broadhead

My first contact with Annachi was at the beginning of the 1980s. I visited the ASSEFA office in Madurai and projects in Natham along with Giovanni Ermiglia, Beppe Lubatti, and many members of the ASSEFA staff. We learned from Annachi and Giovanni how Vinoba Bhave had launched the Bhoodan movement, and how ASSEFA had been founded to help land allottees achieve self-reliance.

For me, the most important lessons from the years that followed — working with and learning from Annachi and ASSEFA — had to do with the ability of an organisation to continually evolve and adapt while remaining true to its principles, and with the quality of leadership that Annachi embodied: never dominating or imposing, but nurturing, challenging, and quietly effective.

Tim Brodhead *is a renowned Canadian leader in philanthropy and international development, best known for serving as President and CEO of the McConnell Foundation and Executive Director of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. With decades of experience in Africa and South Asia, he has played a pivotal role in advancing social innovation and global development initiatives. In recognition of his contributions, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada and awarded honorary doctoral degrees by leading Canadian universities.*



I remained in touch with Annachi over the years following that initial meeting, and in 2019 I was able to spend several weeks with him, revisiting some of the early project sites and witnessing the transformation that had taken place through ASSEFA's support and Annachi's guidance.

We travelled together, and I lived simply in his quarters at one of ASSEFA's village schools. We spoke at length about how India had changed, and about the old and new challenges that remained.

At the end of last year, I received a poem from Annachi which I understood as a gentle farewell.

I was moved to respond, in part, as follows:

That is beautiful — balancing between hope and fear. We are indeed living in a new year, even a new reality, and we struggle to understand what it means — for us and for the world. The old assumptions about how the world works are being swept aside. It seems that might is replacing justice, and old friends are becoming adversaries. The

ways in which people and nature have long been exploited — once hidden or ignored — are now exposed, blatant and unashamed.

The Eden garden — we thought that once it flowered, it would continue on its own, and our attention drifted elsewhere. But gardens require constant care. Weeds and invasive species are always waiting, and nature's anger reveals itself through droughts and floods. It turns out that a few gardeners will never be enough; we must all become gardeners and stewards, attentive to beauty and ready to work hard to create and preserve it.

Our role now is to remain available, to respond when called upon, to carry forward what we have learned, but without assuming that it is always sufficient or still fully relevant. To do what we can, with humility. To remain hopeful.

Annachi remained hopeful — and a source of hope for so many. He will be greatly missed.









The Confidence Builder

IV
6



Ivan Nutbrown

Jennie and I were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Loganathan Annachi. His loss must have come as a profound shock to the entire ASSEFA family — staff, communities, friends, and well-wishers across the world. Yet, we remain grateful to have been among the thousands of people whose lives were touched by Annachi's extraordinary presence, wisdom, and compassion. He was truly a remarkable man, with a clear and unwavering vision of how to work alongside and support marginalised rural communities with dignity and respect.

I remember my very first meeting with him in 1990 with great clarity even today. I had arrived at the Chennai office and waited three days for Annachi to return from a field visit. Soon after, we travelled together by overnight train to Erode and then onward to the village of Vadugapatti, where ASSEFA was supporting a community of silk weavers who had received Bhoodan land. The families needed mulberry saplings and new looms to rebuild their livelihoods.

Ivan Nutbrown *is a founding member and former Coordinator of Action Village India (AVI), a UK-based organization that has supported grassroots development initiatives across rural India for over three decades. Deeply influenced by Gandhian ideals and long associated with ASSEFA and other people's movements, he has been a steadfast friend, supporter, and advocate of community-led development and social justice. His wife Jennie Kitteringham who had carrier in teaching has been the supported of ASSEFA and a well-wisher of Annachi.*

What struck me most during that visit was not what Annachi said, but what he did. Once we arrived, he quietly left me to speak with the ASSEFA field worker while he himself sat on the ground across the village, listening to a group of farmers. That moment stayed with me. It reflected exactly how development work should be done — listening first to the people themselves, rather than to donors or outsiders. It was very different from much of what I had previously experienced in development work elsewhere in India. From that moment onward, I was completely convinced by ASSEFA's people-first approach and looked forward to learning more from Annachi during my many subsequent visits.

Over the years, I witnessed firsthand the immense difference Loganathan ji made in the lives of rural communities. During our last visit in 2023, I watched him come alive in a gathering of village women as he encouraged them to speak openly about their needs and about the ASSEFA programmes that had most transformed their lives. One by one, every woman stood up and spoke — even the shyest among them. He had a rare gift for making people feel heard, valued, and confident.

Across the more than thirty-five years that I knew Annachi, the world changed enormously, and Indian villages changed along with it. Yet one thing never changed: ASSEFA's commitment to placing people at the centre of development. The organisation continually adapted to new challenges while remaining deeply rooted in its original values.

In the early years, ASSEFA focused on supporting families who had received Bhoodan land by helping them level fields, dig wells, and purchase bullocks and farming equipment. Later, recognising the importance of financial independence, Annachi helped establish the Kosh — a people's bank through which villagers could save small amounts and access credit.

His attention then increasingly turned toward women's livelihoods. Understanding the difficulties faced by women whose husbands often migrated for work, he encouraged the creation of small dairy enterprises that women could manage from their homes. These efforts eventually grew into milk collection systems, processing plants, and local markets where women could sell their produce directly within their communities.

In more recent years, Annachi became deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on rural communities. ASSEFA began promoting water conservation, drought-resistant crops, tree planting, solar energy initiatives, and other sustainable practices aimed at protecting both livelihoods and the environment.

Throughout his life, Loganathan Annachi never stopped searching for practical and compassionate ways to address rural poverty. More importantly, he demonstrated pathways that others could follow — always grounded in participation, dignity, and collective action.

He will be remembered not only for the institutions he built, but for the humanity, humility, and hope he carried into every village and every conversation.

He will be sorely missed.



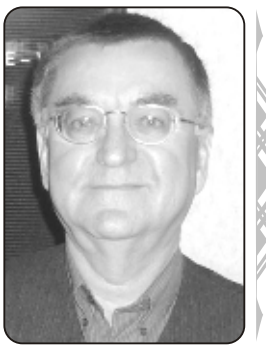

GANDHI JAYANTHI
GANDHI MEMORIAL MUSEUM, MADURAI (28-9-2001 to 2-10-2001)





Prefer working with the poor

IV
7



Yvon Poirier

I first met Sri Loganathan at a meeting in Paris from April 8–10, 2002. The purpose of the gathering was to create an International Network on Local Development. For various reasons, the project did not succeed.

On the very first day, Loganathan invited me to attend a World Congress on Peace in Aliyar, Tamil Nadu, that August. I immediately accepted. He suggested that I speak on the idea of world government.

Before the conference, Loganathan shared documents that helped me better understand ASSEFA and its history. Beyond the impressive accomplishments of the organization, one initiative particularly struck me. In 1999, Loganathan and a French NGO wrote to all living Nobel Peace Prize laureates seeking support for a proposal urging the United Nations to declare 2001–2010 a Decade for Teaching Peace to the Children of the World. With support from the Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, and others, the United Nations ultimately adopted the resolution.

Yvon Poirier *is a distinguished Canadian advocate of the Social and Solidarity Economy and a founding leader of RIPESS, a global network promoting people-centered and sustainable economic alternatives. For over two decades, he has worked internationally to strengthen community-based development, cooperatives, and social enterprises, including representing RIPESS at United Nations forums. A former educator and lifelong social activist, he is widely respected for his contributions to building a more inclusive and equitable global economy.*



The World Congress on Peace, Non-Violence, and Harmony took place from August 10–14, 2002. It was held under the leadership of Maharishi, a 92-year-old spiritual leader with more than 100,000 devotees, and ASSEFA served on the organizing committee. As Loganathan had requested, my presentation focused on the idea that peace is a social construct nurtured within communities. In contrast, many of the spiritual teachings at the conference emphasized inner peace as the path toward peace in the world.

The conference brought together ministers from the Union Government and many other leaders. The conference publication included messages from Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Dalai Lama, and others. At the conclusion of the event, the United Nations High Commissioner traveled from New Delhi to formally receive the Declaration. In his remarks, he emphasized the importance of inner peace and noted that the United Nations had listened to civil society initiatives such as ASSEFA's proposal for the Decade for Teaching Peace.

Afterward, Loganathan explained to me that in India, gaining recognition and support for social initiatives often depended on relationships and credibility. The public acknowledgment from the UN representative before all the participants gave ASSEFA an important level of recognition and legitimacy.

In the days before and after the Congress, we visited ASSEFA villages in different regions. We experienced Indian culture through temple visits, participation in a conference on the caste system, and many other activities. A group from Italy also

joined these visits. Since an Italian, Giovanni Ermiglia, helped Loganathan establish the first village initiative in 1969, Italians later created ASSEFA Italia, which still exists today.

Over the next twenty-three years, my relationship with Loganathan continued and deepened. We became like brothers, united by a common purpose: to support and uplift the underprivileged of this world.

Throughout those years, we exchanged ideas and information of every kind. I did whatever I could to help others in our international movement better understand ASSEFA and its work.

In October 2011, I was able to invite Loganathan to speak at an international conference in Montreal on public policy. At first, he hesitated. He told me, "I have attended many conferences, and I no longer learn much from them. I prefer working with the poor." I understood exactly what he meant. Still, I encouraged him by saying that the purpose was not for him to learn, but for others to benefit from the immense knowledge and experience he had to share. Following the conference, he also attended a Social and Solidarity Economy Academy organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In March 2012, together with my friend and colleague David Thompson from Australia—who had met Loganathan in Montreal—we reunited in the Madurai region of Tamil Nadu. Once again, we visited villages, including a new community in the Western Ghats where a school was under construction. Afterward, we attended a conference in Kochi, Kerala, organized by David around the idea of a people-centered economy. Our dear friend David passed away in 2020.

In 2018, ASSEFA joined the RIPESS network, and since 2021 it has served on the Board of Directors through Kumar ji.

For me personally, this remains an important milestone, as it represents the recognition of RIPESS as a truly global network devoted to serving humanity.

Dear Loganathan ji, you remain with us through the work you inspired and the lives you transformed.







Annachi - A Beacon for All

IV
8



Franco and Rosanna

In February 1985, Franco and Rosanna, a young couple, left for India.

This is their story.

"We were filled with enthusiasm, curiosity, and the lightheartedness that often accompanies youthful travel. It was our first time in India, and we had no idea that the journey would profoundly change the way we looked at the world and at our own lives.

The India awaiting us had a deep impact: the colors, the scents, the chaos of the towns, but also the extreme poverty, the profound social contradictions, the faces of children in the villages, and the schools—very simple, yet vibrant with joy.

Franco was already somewhat familiar with the reality of ASSEFA through his work with Movimento Sviluppo e Pace in Turin, while for Rosanna that world was almost entirely new and unknown.

Franco and Rosanna *are the founders of ASSEFA Alessandria, Italy, and long-standing friends and supporters of the ASSEFA movement in India. Through their unwavering commitment to Gandhian values, international solidarity, and grassroots development, they have helped build enduring bridges of friendship and cooperation between Italy and India. Their dedicated efforts have contributed significantly to mobilizing support for rural development, education, and community empowerment initiatives.*

It was on that journey that we met Loganathan ji.

We still remember the first moment we saw him. He welcomed us with his radiant smile, a warm and sincere handshake, and the kind of ironic humor that could lighten any situation. Even then, he possessed an extraordinary charisma: an intense yet never intrusive presence, an authoritative yet deeply human personality.

He immediately made us feel welcome, almost as though we had become part of a family we did not yet know we had.

With great patience, he told us how ASSEFA had been founded in 1969 to offer concrete opportunities to the poorest, the landless, and the most vulnerable. His words carried vision, spirituality, and an extraordinary ability to transform dreams into reality.

That journey left us deeply shaken. When we returned to Italy, we felt amazed, disoriented, and distressed. At first, we even experienced a sense of rejection, because the reality we had encountered was so harsh and so distant from our daily lives. Yet what we had seen together with Loganathan ji had touched our hearts and would never leave us.

In the years that followed, Loganathan ji often came to Italy to meet the many groups that were emerging during that period. He also came to Alessandria, where he spent wonderful times with us.

We still remember one scene that today makes us smile with tenderness.

As we left the house, we locked the door. He looked at us with affectionate irony and said:

“In the West, you fear people, and that is why you close your doors. In our Indian villages, the doors remain open. We do not fear strangers; we welcome everyone.”

With only a few words, he could make us reflect deeply.

He returned many times after that, and we always awaited his visits with joy, because each one was a precious gift. We were nourished by his wisdom, his profound understanding of the human soul, and a spirituality that transformed itself daily into service to others.

Meanwhile, both ASSEFA India and ASSEFA Alessandria continued to grow: the projects expanded, more people became involved, and greater attention was given to the most fragile, the forgotten, and those too often considered unimportant.

And he was always there.

With tireless dedication, extraordinary foresight, and a rare ability to look far ahead without ever losing sight of each individual person, he became a guide, a protector, and a point of reference for all of us.

Even during his final year, he continued writing to us with reflections full of light and serenity.

We last met him in August 2025.

He was visibly tired and physically more fragile, yet his spirit remained untouched. He insisted on personally accompanying us to visit an agricultural project, and that day he spoke about the future—his dreams and his new plans.
He seemed like someone who did not fear death, because he understood that the love we sow lives on beyond time.

That day, he called Franco to his side, embraced him, and said:

“This is the last time we will meet. I am ill. But do not worry—I will always be by your side.”

That embrace captured the meaning of true brotherhood: two souls walking together to spread Gandhi’s message of peace, justice, and love.

One day, Loganathan ji told Franco:

“Dear brother, one day we will go together to pray to God in the Himalayas.”

They never made that journey together. But now his soul is close to God—perhaps even in the Himalayas.

Loganathan ji left us on April 28, 2026.

But he also left us a path that we must continue walking.

And every time we encounter a hand to shake or a door to hold open, we will know that he is still by our side.

Always.





A Bond Rooted in Non-Violence, Dignity, and Service



Elena Camino and Franco

I have very vivid memories of Loganathanji, whom I first met in India forty years ago and whom I later had the opportunity to meet several times again in Turin, Italy. There, he was hosted by the nonviolent association Centro Studi Sereno Regis (CSSR) to present the initiatives of ASSEFA India, particularly the development of schools that offered an education rooted in nonviolence, inspired by Gandhian thought and the teachings of Vinoba Bhave.

Over the decades, many twinning projects were established between schools in Turin and schools in ASSEFA villages — initiatives that Loganathanji always warmly supported and deeply appreciated. These exchanges of ideas, along with the sharing of common ideals, also nurtured a lasting friendship between the Turin ASSEFA group, the CSSR (of which Nanni Salio served for many years as President), and Loganathanji himself.

This bond grew from a shared worldview — one grounded in nonviolence, human dignity, and service to others.

Elena Camino and Franco Lovisolo *are the founders of ASSEFA Torino, Italy, and long-standing supporters of the ASSEFA movement and its Gandhian vision of development. Through their commitment to international solidarity, education, and social justice, they have helped build enduring partnerships between communities in Italy and India. Their dedicated efforts have contributed significantly to promoting rural development, environmental awareness, and people-centered development initiatives.*



International Friends and Partners

1. Andrea Branca and Ester
2. Tarek Toubale
3. Agnès Duperrin
4. Prof. Israr Qureshi
5. Andy Rutherford
6. Alda Benazzi
7. Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria
8. Rev. Dr. Fr. Deva
9. Paul Born
10. David Mitchell
11. Silvia
12. Elena Ercole



A Visionary beyond Time

V
1



Andrea Branca and Ester

Loganathanji's passing is a profound loss for all of us, and especially for ASSEFA. As ONG Mani Tese, we have had the privilege of working with ASSEFA since 1996.

I fondly remember our conversations on the terrace in Chinnasalem about development, partnership, education, the central role of women in social progress, the need for projects to evolve into long-term processes, and Gandhi's social and economic ideas. I deeply cherish those moments, as well as the many occasions when we planned projects together.

He immediately grasped objectives and strategies because he deeply understood the needs of his people. His vision always extended beyond the present; he possessed the rare ability to anticipate and shape future pathways for development.

Andrea Branca and Ester *are dedicated development professionals and long-time friends of ASSEFA through their association with Mani Tese, Italy. Through their leadership and commitment to international cooperation, they have supported numerous initiatives aimed at empowering rural communities, promoting social justice, and fostering sustainable development. Their enduring solidarity and partnership have strengthened the bonds between civil society organizations in Italy and India.*

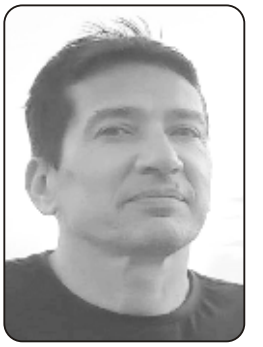


Rooted in his land and among his people, he lived simply and travelled constantly to the poorest villages. Loganathanji guided communities toward social progress, economic independence, and dignity, always striving for liberation and freedom. His loss is deeply felt by all of us



The Defining Inspiration for my Journey

V
2



Tarek Toubale

The phrase "being of service to others" gained its fullest meaning for me the day I met Annachi in Chennai in 2003. From that moment on, he became the defining inspiration for my journey in the social sector.

I had the privilege of witnessing the extraordinary achievements of ASSEFA, the organization he founded to empower the rural poor. Its work spanned countless sectors and touched lives across India. Yet beyond the staggering scale of his accomplishments, what struck me most was his profound simplicity. Annachi possessed a rare gift for connecting with anyone—from a marginalized widow to a wealthy benefactor. He could disarm the most guarded communities with his signature humor and warm, communicative smile, inspiring collective commitment in an age of growing individualism. The gratitude I saw on the faces of those he served is something I will never forget.

Tarek Toubale *is President of WEGA, an accredited NGO in Luxembourg, and General Secretary of Karuna-Shechen in Paris. After leaving investment banking in 2004, he devoted his career to the development sector and has spent over 20 years supporting humanitarian and community development initiatives around the world.*

Throughout his life, he remained a faithful practitioner of the non-violent philosophy of his guru, Vinoba Bhave, leading above all by example. He avoided grand speeches, embodying instead humility, patience, and a deep willingness to listen. Today, his legacy feels more vital than ever in a world increasingly marked by violence, vested interests, and widening inequality.

He leaves behind a rare blueprint for social service that will continue to inspire generations of NGOs and changemakers. I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to have contributed, in some small way, to the remarkable edifice he built.





Ambitious yet Pragmatic

V
3



Agnès Duperrin

We met Sri Loganathan in 2004, at a particular moment in our family's life, three years after the death of my father, Christian Duperrin, who had founded SFTN to support children and provide scholarships for poor and deserving students.

SFTN owned land intended for welcoming children. After my father's death, his partner at the time gave up on the project. We then found ourselves searching for an Indian organisation with whom we could work on a construction project in Kottuchery, near Karaikal. The original idea was to welcome children without parental support, including orphans. We had the land and many ideas, but without an Indian partner, the project itself had no meaning.

We spoke at length with Loganathan. He then said: "We will continue your father's work, your father's dream."

That was the beginning of twenty years of cooperation. We remained constantly connected, through letters, discussions, and meetings in Pooriampakkam and

Agnès Duperrin *is Co-President of SFTN (Solidarité France Tamil Nadu & Pondystate), a long-time partner of ASSEFA India. Through her dedication to international solidarity and rural development, she has helped strengthen the enduring collaboration between SFTN and ASSEFA, inspired by the vision of Sri Loganathan.*



Kottuchery. He always guided us toward responding more meaningfully to local needs.

How can I speak about Loganathan without mentioning what an extraordinary listener he was, how soft his voice sounded—sometimes almost impossible to hear—how his eyes sparkled with humour, and above all, how ambitious yet pragmatic his projects were?

Together, we built a school, provided scholarships for children from surrounding villages, opened sewing and computer classes, and created training programmes in civil engineering and public works. We also built a small water purification plant to provide affordable drinking water for nearby families.

We helplessly watched heavy rains destroy the building from its foundations; then we rebuilt it again.

We saw how Loganathan patiently guided training teams, motivated students and teachers, and encouraged women to become autonomous and self-confident. We followed him as he visited community farms, women's self-help groups managing microcredit programmes, yoga classes, art workshops, and English classes.

We shared meals with him and walked at night among the ruins of Tranquebar and the gardens of Pooriampakkam. Back in France, we read his reports, examined ASSEFA project accounts, and raised as much funding as possible to support some of those initiatives.

Through us, he met our friend and "aunty," Léonie Manikam, in Kottuchery. She became a true "soul sister" to him. For decades, she had worked tirelessly to help the poorest, especially through the education of children and women.

It was deeply moving to watch them talk, laugh, and exchange stories with such passion. Being from the same generation, both largely uninterested in material things—although Loganathan sometimes joked that Léonie carried modesty a little too far—and both deeply convinced of the transformative power of education for India's future, they developed a profound closeness.

Whenever he visited us in Karaikal, Loganathan would always stop by Léonie's small house, sit on a simple plastic chair, and continue conversations that had begun months earlier. They often said how much they inspired one another in the best possible way.

Their enduring commitment, marked by humility and quiet resilience, deeply inspired us as well.

We will always remember their teachings: dare to dream big, always listen to the needs of others, trust your partners to take the lead, and never lose faith, even when disappointment threatens an entire project.

"That's simply human, isn't it?" Loganathan would say.

But he also taught us to think far ahead, to live in harmony with nature, to protect it, and never act against it. This vision mattered deeply to us, and we always felt connected to it.

With Loganathan, we also learned to slow down and appreciate a beautiful landscape, a good meal, or the discovery of a new place.

"You are not in India only for working!" he would say.

Yet he himself worked tirelessly, as did his wonderful team in Pooriampakkam.

Loganathan never placed pressure upon us. If we lacked funding for a project, he would simply reassure us: "That's fine, we'll find the money."

We were fortunate to welcome him to Paris before he finally stopped travelling outside India, and to introduce him to our French members. Everyone admired his

simplicity, his openness, and his smile. Everyone left feeling somehow happier and larger in spirit.

Some years ago, our daughter Coralie travelled alone to India as a young adult. She was delighted by Loganathan's invitation to join an ASSEFA school near Madurai. There, she taught drawing and English, but above all, she shared daily life with the children and teachers—moments and stories that remain precious memories to this day.

She deeply respected Loganathan's work, but she also loved the person he was.

"He was a great man, and a great soul," she said upon hearing of his passing.

The last time we visited India, in 2025, Loganathan made a quick trip from Madurai to Kottuchery to see us. He spent time talking at Léonie's house, sitting as always on the same simple plastic chair, before taking us to meet the new leadership team responsible for training programmes.

Later, we had dinner together at a restaurant he liked in Karaikal.

Time never seemed to change him. Yet during that visit, he quietly confided that since the passing of his wife, he too felt ready.

Then, after our conversations, he was back on the road again, travelling through the night toward Madurai.

"I can sleep in the car," he said.

Whether in Paris, in the south or west of France, or wherever our members now live, a small part of his memory remains alive with us.

We humbly commit ourselves to helping create a fairer, kinder, and more respectful world—for human beings and for all of nature.

His spirit remains alive within us and around us.

And we know with certainty that, somehow, he still watches over us.



A Leader among Equals

V
4



Prof. Israr Qureshi

It is both a privilege and a deeply emotional experience to remember and honor the life of Annachi, Sri S. Loganathan ji — a rare leader whose life was not merely inspired by Gandhian ideals, but was a living embodiment of them.

I had followed his illustrious work since 1988 through ASSEFA's extraordinary journey of community transformation and Sarvodaya-inspired development. Yet beyond knowing of his remarkable achievements from afar, I had the special privilege of spending a week with Annachi in February 2022. That time with him left a profound and lasting impression on me, not only because of the scale of his life's work, but because of the extraordinary simplicity, warmth, and humanity with which he carried it.

What struck me most was the remarkable harmony between his words and his actions. In many leaders, ideals remain aspirations; in Annachi, they became

Prof. Israr Qureshi *is Professor of Social Entrepreneurship and Digital Development at Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom. A long-time well-wisher of ASSEFA, he has conducted research on the organization's innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives, recognizing their contribution to sustainable rural development and social transformation.*

everyday practice. Through his leadership of ASSEFA, he demonstrated that Gandhian concepts such as Sarvodaya — the welfare of all — were not abstract philosophical principles, but living and actionable pathways for building self-reliant, peaceful, and equitable communities.

His work transformed barren land into sustainable livelihoods. He empowered women through collective institutions and self-help groups. He nurtured ecosystems of education, health, and financial inclusion. Most importantly, he built institutions rooted in dignity, participation, and trust — institutions designed not to depend on charismatic individuals alone, but to outlast them.

Yet beyond these remarkable achievements, what I cherish most are the deeply human moments and memories.

During my time with him, Annachi's sharp observations about society, politics, and human nature constantly revealed a mind that remained intensely curious, reflective, and intellectually alive. He possessed a wonderful sense of humour and an understated wit that emerged effortlessly in conversation. Even while discussing difficult realities such as poverty, inequality, or institutional challenges, he could lighten the moment with a subtle joke, a perceptive anecdote, or a perfectly timed remark.

His humour was never dismissive or cynical; rather, it reflected wisdom, compassion, and a deep understanding of people.

I was especially struck by how attentively he listened to everyone around him — villagers, workers, activists, students, academics, and visitors alike — with equal seriousness and respect. There was no hierarchy in the way he engaged with people. He made everyone feel heard, valued, and included. That, perhaps, was one of his greatest qualities.

What also stayed with me was his unwavering faith in communities themselves. He showed us that development is not about delivering solutions to people, but about building capabilities within communities. He believed deeply in local leadership, collective responsibility, and the moral power of self-organization.

At a time when inequality, fragmentation, and distrust increasingly dominate global discourse, his life offered a powerful counter-narrative: that social justice, harmony,

and inclusive development are achievable when guided by values, humility, and collective action.

Annachi's legacy cannot be measured merely through institutions, projects, or programmes, remarkable as they are. His true legacy lives in the countless lives he touched, the confidence he restored to marginalized communities, the ethical imagination he inspired in younger generations, and the hope he created for a more humane and equitable world.

For those of us fortunate enough to have known him, his absence is deeply felt. Yet his presence endures — in the communities he strengthened, in the values he lived by, and in the quiet but powerful example he set for all who seek to combine scholarship, service, and humanity.

I am confident that ASSEFA and all those inspired by him will continue to carry forward his vision with the same humility, conviction, courage, and commitment to service that defined his remarkable life.

His influence will continue to guide and shape my work in profound and lasting ways.









A Visionary committed to Social Justice

V
5



Andy Rutherford

Across our world, there are remarkable people who work every day to contribute towards more just, equal, and inclusive communities — people with a deep commitment to social justice. For some, this commitment becomes a lifelong calling. Annachi was one such remarkable person.

Sri Annachi Loganathan Ji was visionary, principled, and deeply inspiring — not only within the communities of Tamil Nadu where he devoted his life's work, but also to everyone who had the privilege of meeting him, spending time with him, and witnessing the way he interacted with women, men, and children in often marginalized communities.

To see, appreciate, and learn from the way he journeyed alongside people toward greater dignity, opportunity, and social justice in their lives and livelihoods inspired many across India and around the world to deepen their own commitments to social transformation.

Andy Rutherford *is Chair of Action Village India (AVI), UK, and a long-standing supporter of grassroots development initiatives in India. A friend and well-wisher of ASSEFA, he has contributed to strengthening international partnerships that advance rural development, social justice, and community empowerment.*

His lifelong dedication to social justice helped create more just, equal, and inclusive communities. This is a profoundly important achievement and legacy.

Sri Annachi Loganathan Ji's life and work were infused with humanity and respect, deeply rooted in Gandhian principles and reflected in the way he engaged with people of all classes, backgrounds, and genders.

It has been a deep privilege for Friends of ASSEFA, and later Action Village India, to stand in solidarity with ASSEFA over many years. At Action Village India, we intend to honour Sri Annachi Loganathan Ji's legacy by continuing our contribution toward a more prosperous, fair, and just rural India. We have shared this commitment with all our supporters.

Though he has left his mortal body, Annachi will continue to guide and inspire the Action Village India community, along with countless others across the world.

A sincere and respectful thank you, Annachi.



A Rare Gift for Making Things work

V
6



Alda Benazzi

The last time we met was in early September 2024 at ASSEFA's milk plant in Natham, on the occasion of a staff meeting with the Self-Help Group members of the area.

I was there with some friends from the ASSEFA Genova Group, visiting one of the many successful accomplishments of ASSEFA before heading to Pondicherry, where over the years ASSEFA has done so much for needy people living in the coastal areas, especially after the tsunami of December 2004.

You were cheerful as always, but your movements were slower than usual, and your goodbyes sounded strangely final. Were you already sensing something? Annachi, you were the head and the heart of ASSEFA, and everyone — staff members, villagers, and friends from all over the world — who encountered

Alda Benazzi *of Genova, Italy, is a committed member of ASSEFA Genova and has actively supported its work for many years. She has been instrumental in promoting the vision, mission, and development initiatives of ASSEFA India in Genova, helping raise awareness and solidarity for programs that improve the lives of poor and vulnerable communities in rural India.*

your kindness and pragmatism responded with deep respect and great affection because of your lifelong commitment to the poor, inspired by Gandhiji's principles.

Like an inspired sculptor, you saw ASSEFA — born in the late 1960s — grow into a successful and far-reaching movement that transformed the lives of remote rural communities across Tamil Nadu.

Annachi, you had received a rare gift from nature: foresight.

In every situation, and in the face of every problem, you always seemed to have a solution at hand because you were quick to consider every option and wise in evaluating the possible outcomes after listening carefully to everyone involved.

Yes, Annachi, you were a wonderful listener — the mark of a humble and respectful man with a sharp mind and sound judgment.

You also possessed remarkable interpersonal and managerial skills, along with a rare ability to absorb ideas while they were still taking shape in conversation.

You learned quickly and adapted projects thoughtfully so they truly suited the communities ASSEFA worked with. You had a rare gift for making things work — not only because you were intelligent, but because you remained deeply humble.

Behind your gentle, sometimes shy smile and quiet laughter was a witty man with a wonderful sense of humour, always ready either to make everyone burst into laughter or hold them spellbound with stories from your life experiences. You were an orator of great depth, Annachi, and it was always a pleasure listening to your stories while travelling by bus to a remote ASSEFA project.

Visiting rural Tamil Nadu will never feel the same without you.

Annachi, you were at once profound and easy-going, a man who lived both fully and simply.

It has been a privilege to have known you, Annachi, and an honour to speak with you about life while travelling long distances together or sharing breakfast at a small family restaurant in Chennai before my return to Italy.

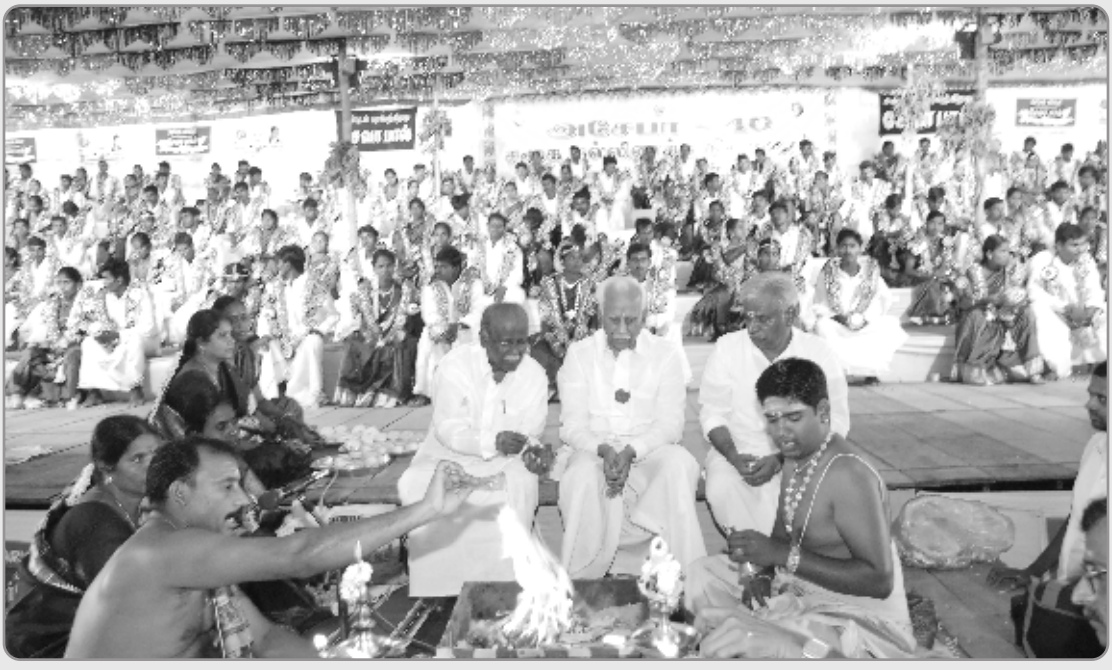
What a joy it was to spend time with you visiting ASSEFA's projects around Madurai, or travelling together through towns and temples on the way to the ASSEFA head office in Chennai.

You have been one of the greatest guides in my life.

Dearest Annachi, you will be deeply missed — and already are — as a man who touched countless lives far beyond ASSEFA itself.









A Model for Policy Makers and Community Workers

V
7



Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria

I was first introduced to the work of ASSEFA and the late Loganathan by Yvon Poirier and David Thompson of RIPESS. They told me this a community-based project I must visit in South India. It has all the features of SSE social solidarity economy.

That opportunity came in 2012 when COMMACT International hosted a gathering in Kochin, India where both Loganathan and his son Kumar participated. Subsequently I have made a number of visits to both Chennai and Madurai to visit their work.

Since then, I had a number of occasions to visit ASSEFA in Madurai and have many interactions with the late Loganathan who is affectionately called Annachi (older or elder brother in the Tamil language).

Denison Jayasooria *is a distinguished Malaysian sociologist, public policy advocate, and co-founder of the Asian Solidarity Economy Council, promoting Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives across Asia. As a leading champion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he has played a pivotal role in advancing inclusive development, social justice, and grassroots participation through civil society and public policy engagement. A respected scholar and practitioner, he has contributed extensively to regional and global dialogues on sustainable development and social transformation.*



From the day I first met him and had a conversation with him and his team a number of key thoughts impressed me of both the organisation and Loganathan's leadership style.

From the work of ASSEFA

I documented a case study of the ASEFA movement which was moulded by Annachi Loganathan. This is in a booklet entitled "Grassroots Solidarity in Revitalising Rural Economy in Asia, Drawing Lessons from Three Case Studies in India, Indonesia, and China" (KITA-UKM, 2020) Here I concluded that ASSEFA is following the Gandhian vision for rural development which is village level, decentralised approach where democracy, decision making and collective action enables them to undertake their own produce including cottage industries located in rural areas.

Drawing from a workshop hosted on Jan 10, 2020 at ASSEFA. Madurai, entitled "Local economy: views from Madurai grassroots conversations" The conversation was about local economy issues and how these impact rural India including how to empower local communities to face these challenges. The work of the ASSEFA

network highlighted the tremendous potential of local economies which are community based. They are all successful alternative business models to private sector investment and people disempowering approaches.

From the Life of the late Annachi Loganathan

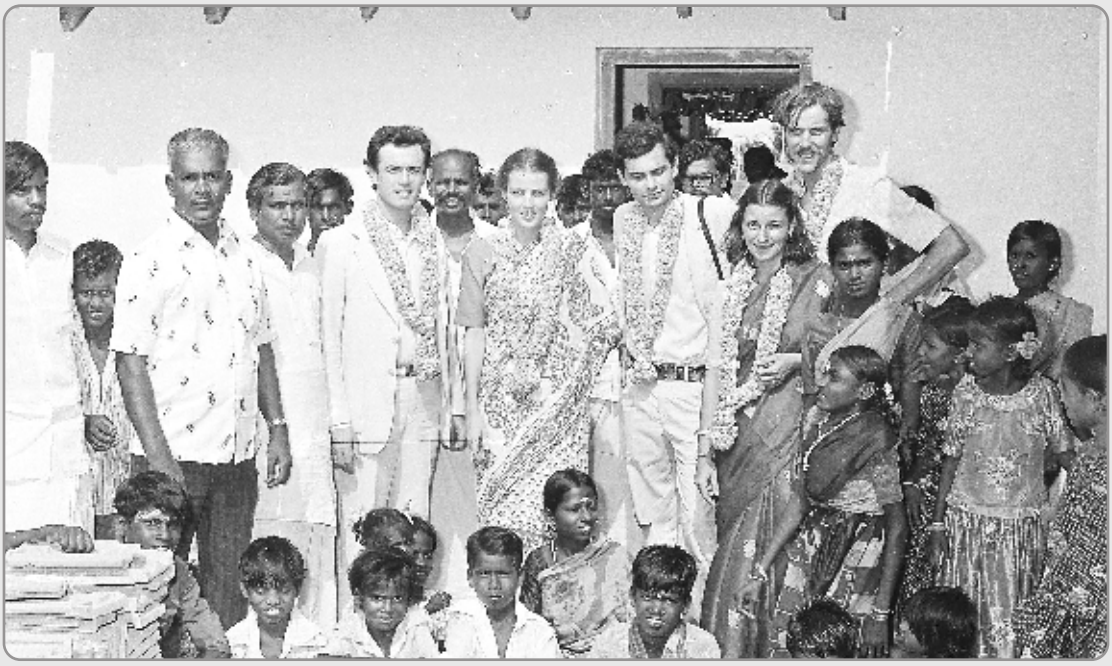
Drawing from the life and works of Annachi Loganathan I can note three significant leadership qualities which must be the cornerstone quality of SSE community leaders:-

First, Annachi Loga is a very humble person. He does not seem to impress people with what he wears or even by the way he conducts himself. Not just humble but also non dominating. His leadership model is empowering others to not only look good but serve well humanity.

Second, Annachi Loga is a man of deep conviction. He has confidence in human nature and the power of the self to change destiny. He has a good grasp of history especially the struggles of landless people and their fight for their rights and justice. His thoughts have a strong Gandhian influence.

Third, Annachi Loga is a team player. A team of women dominate but also men. ASSEFA is a movement, it is not a single organisation but a network of many village based socio-economic groups, associations and business ventures with a common goal of socio-economic empowerment of rural villages.

We are saddened by his passing away but we are assured that his legacy lives on. His life and works will be remembered and emulated for all social solidarity economy policy makers and community workers. ASEC remembers him and his contributions.







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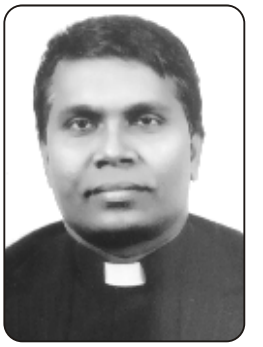
I Met a Saint: Loganathan



Rev. Dr. Fr. Deva

In 2007, Madam Itala, the President of ASSEFA Genova, visited the ASSEFA mission in Tamil Nadu along with a group from Italy. The visit lasted fifteen days, and during that time I had the privilege of meeting, for the first time, Sri Loganathan — Annachi. Today, after his passing, I remember him with deep respect and gratitude. I truly feel that I met a saint.

From the very beginning, Loganathan impressed me with his simplicity. He was a simple man with strong convictions and a deep love for humanity. He spoke gently, lived modestly, and treated everyone with dignity and respect. He never tried to project power or importance. Yet through his words and actions, one could clearly see his wisdom, discipline, and unwavering commitment to the poor.

During our journey across Tamil Nadu, Loganathan took us to many ASSEFA centres and villages — Sivakasi, Natham, Madurai, Puducherry, and several

Fr. Deva, *a Catholic priest from Sivagangai now serving in Genoa, Italy, is an active member of ASSEFA Genova. He passionately promotes the work of ASSEFA India, especially its community-based development initiatives, educational support for children, and sustainable development programs. Through his advocacy, he shares stories of hope and positive transformation among poor and marginalized communities, strengthening international friendship and support for ASSEFA's mission.*

rural communities. Everywhere we went, we witnessed ASSEFA's work among poor and marginalised people. We visited schools where children were receiving not only education, but also hope for a better future. We saw vocational training centres where young people learned skills to support themselves and their families. We met women involved in self-help groups and cooperative programmes that helped them gain confidence and independence. We also saw agricultural initiatives, village organisations, awareness programmes, and cooperative movements through which communities worked together for their own development.

What touched me most deeply was that ASSEFA was not simply providing money or services. The mission was helping people rediscover their dignity and inner strength. Loganathan believed that every human being has value and deserves respect. He believed in equality, justice, cooperation, and nonviolence. He lived the Gandhian ideals of Sarvodaya in his daily life and encouraged others to do the same.

As a Catholic priest, I observed Loganathan carefully during our travels and meetings. I realised that he was not only teaching these values — he was living them every day. The entire ASSEFA team worked in the same spirit. Their vision was to break the cycle of poverty and help build a society rooted in humanity, truth, justice, equality, and peace. Thousands of communities across Tamil Nadu experienced change through this mission.

Years later, in March, I met Loganathan again in the hospital. Even in illness, his spirit remained strong. He continued speaking about Gandhian ideals, Sarvodaya, and service to humanity. His concern was never for himself, but always for the people and the mission. That moved me deeply.

During our visits, I often asked myself: Where did Loganathan find the strength to continue this mission of social transformation for so many years? How did he develop such compassion for the poor? From where did his deep inner strength and passion for service come?

Slowly, the answer became clear as I observed his daily life.

Loganathan's strength came from his spiritual discipline and inner life. He woke early each morning for prayer, meditation, silence, and yoga. He spent time in reflection and entered deeply into the presence of God through silence and faith. These practices gave him clarity, peace, wisdom, and strength.

His spiritual life and Gandhian ideals gave meaning and energy to his social action. Prayer gave him compassion. Silence gave him understanding. Meditation gave him

patience and balance. Faith gave him the courage to continue serving even through difficulties and challenges.

I came to understand that his social work was not merely an activity or profession. It was a mission flowing from his inner life. He believed deeply that people, working together, could transform society. He believed that service must be carried out with love, humility, truth, and nonviolence.

Today, even after his passing, the life of Founder Loganathan continues to inspire many people. His example lives on in the hearts of those who seek to transform themselves and serve others. He showed us that true greatness is not found in wealth, power, or fame, but in serving humanity with love and simplicity.

For me, meeting Loganathan was not simply meeting a social leader. It was meeting a man whose life reflected peace, prayer, compassion, discipline, and service. His life challenged me personally — both as a priest and as a human being.

Some people leave behind success and achievements. Others leave behind buildings and institutions. But rare individuals leave behind a spirit that continues to inspire others even after they are gone. Loganathan was one such person.

His life teaches us that true social change begins in the human heart. Peace begins within us. Service becomes meaningful when it flows from love and faith. Loganathan dedicated his entire life to serving the poor and building a more humane and peaceful society.

Even after his passing, his mission continues through the people and communities he touched. His memory lives on in everyone who works for justice, equality, cooperation, and nonviolence.

I thank God for the grace of having met such a man. Truly, with gratitude and faith, I can say : I met a saint.

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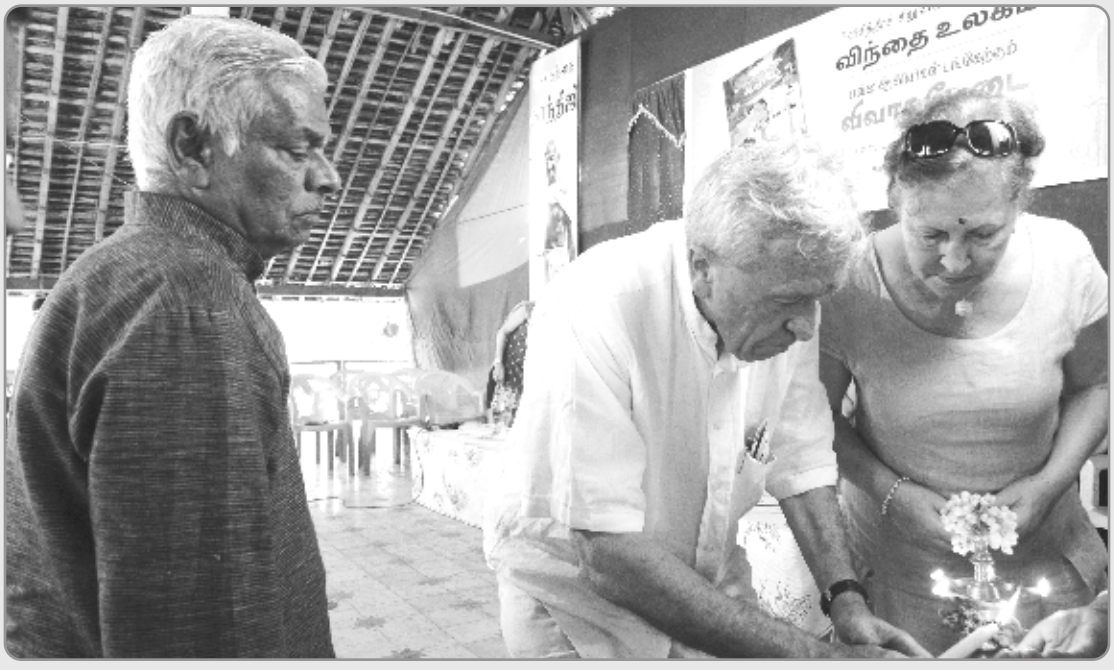
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Brought out the best in me

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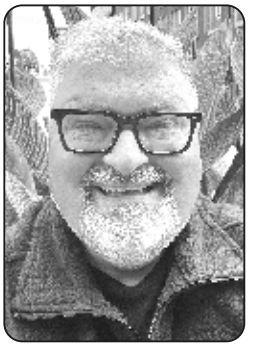


Paul Born

I first met Sri S. Loganathan Ji (fondly known as Annachi) while researching my book Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times. My good friend Tim Brodhead, who was held in high regard by Sri Loganathan, had arranged a one-hour interview for me.

We met in Annachi's apartment at the ASSEFA offices in Chennai. I arrived with a half-dozen questions about Sarvodaya — questions that seemed to spark Annachi's curiosity. When our hour was up, he smiled and said, "Why do we not take a break and continue over supper?" I was thrilled that he wanted to extend our visit.

Paul Born *is an Order of Canada recipient and social innovator renowned for his work in poverty reduction and community engagement. He is the bestselling author of Deepening Community and Breakthrough Community Change.*

As this was my first trip to India, I remember being somewhat shaken by the walk to the restaurant. The roads were a sensory overload — crowded with cars and people, forcing us to walk in single file to navigate the bustle.

That evening, our conversation deepened. I asked about his life and the evolution of ASSEFA. I found myself drawn in; I became, as we say in my tradition, a believer.

My search on this trip was driven by a theme central to all my research: I was looking for "thinking systems" — belief systems that, when lived authentically, create people who genuinely care for one another.

I was curious about those living Sarvodaya in modern times. Sri Loganathan's life's work with ASSEFA was a living argument that Sarvodaya is not just an ancient Indian ideal, but a viable modern alternative for global development.

He moved the movement beyond "walking and talking" (yatras) toward creating physical infrastructure — dams, schools, and dairy farms — owned and managed by the people themselves.

Sarva Seva means "Service to All." Under Annachi's leadership, ASSEFA expanded the definition of Sarvodaya to include micro-business development, education, and directly addressing the root causes of village inequality.

I was particularly moved by Sri Loganathan's uncompromising opposition to the dowry system. Within the Sarvodaya framework, he viewed dowry not merely as a "bad habit," but as a structural barrier to the "uplift of all." He argued poignantly that if a family gains economic freedom through a farm only to lose it to dowry, their "uplift" is nothing more than an illusion.

He shared with me, and later with Tim, a beautiful dream: providing every young woman coming of age with a young milking cow. The calf would grow alongside her, and she would bring it into her marriage as a tangible asset — making her a financial contributor from the very start of the union.

"These weren't just animals; they were seeds of independence."

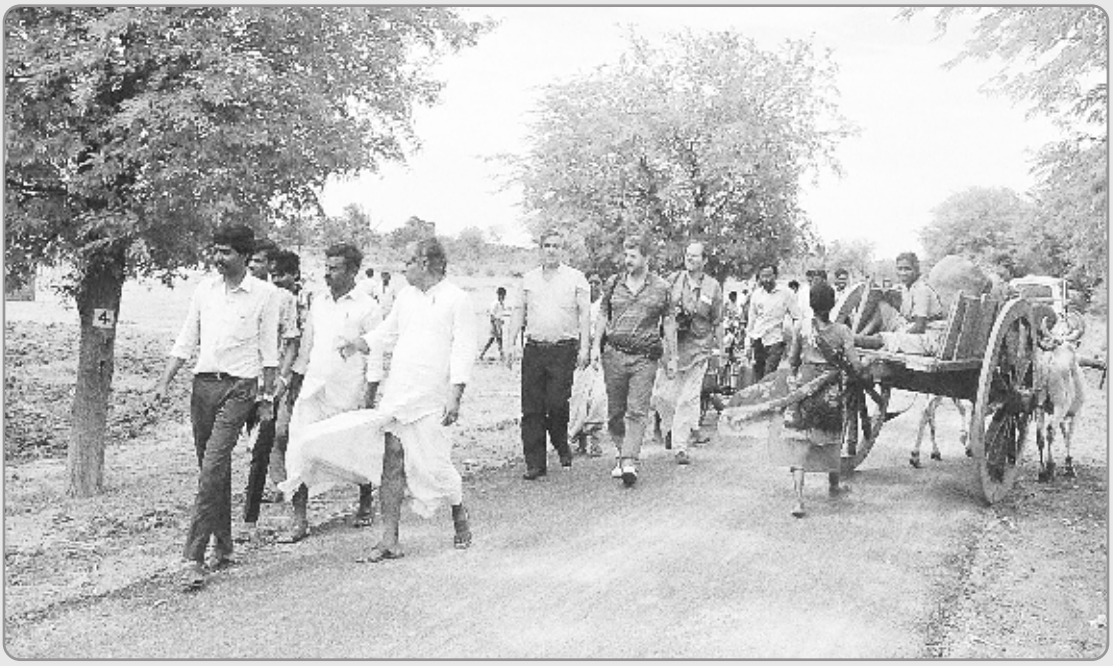
This vision inspired us. Over the following years, we reached out to family and friends and raised nearly $100,000 CAD, enabling ASSEFA to provide more than 700 calves to young women.

Sri Loganathan inspired me — his life, his work, and his words. He brought out the best in me and helped me find the strength to be better than I was.

He taught me to desire Sarvodaya for others and to strive for systems that embody it.

I will miss him dearly.









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10

A Mother's Wisdom, A Lifetime of Values

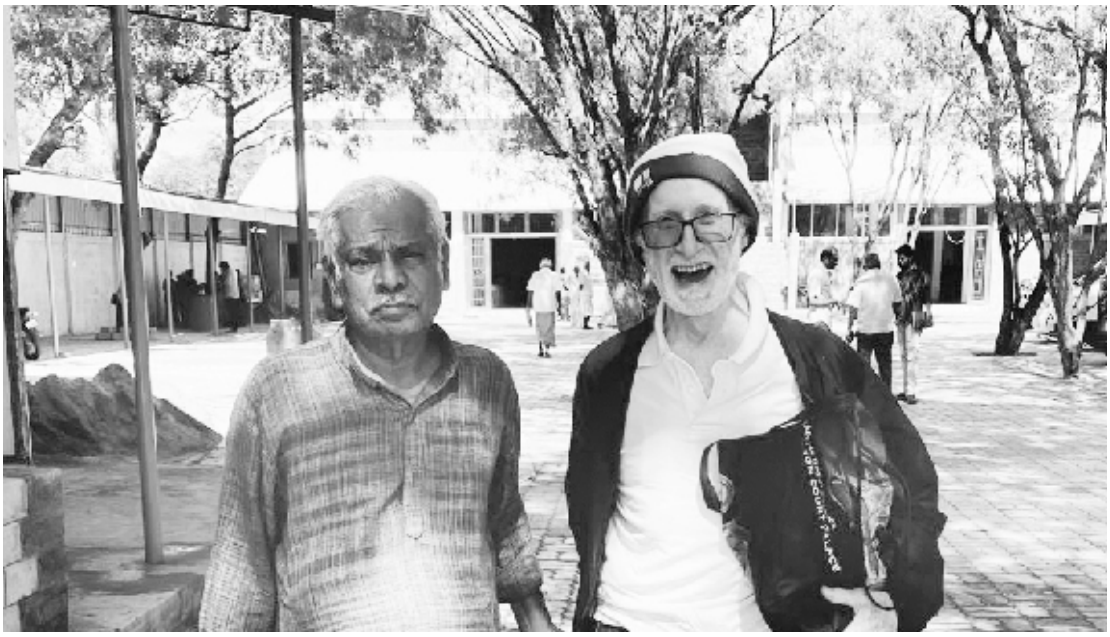


David Mitchell

Although the time we spent together over the years was brief, it was significant, and its impact has been lasting. It began with a surprise encounter when Annachi happened to be in London in the autumn of 1989. It was not until 2018 that we met again.

We had a long conversation during which he spoke extensively about the context in which ASSEFA came into being, especially the impact his mother had on his life. The family had feared her passing because she had stopped eating, yet they remained hopeful that when Annachi arrived — being the youngest son and her favourite — she would agree to eat. But she refused, and quietly wasted away, saying that her time was done and that she did not wish to become a burden on the family.

David Mitchell *is a retired teacher from the United Kingdom and an active supporter of Action Village India (AVI). Inspired by ASSEFA's commitment to rural development and social justice, he has been a long-standing friend of the organization and regularly visited ASSEFA and Annachi during his trips to India.*



To Annachi, his mother's example represented humility and gratitude for the life she had lived. This story resonated powerfully with me at the time and has continued to do so ever since, particularly as I came to understand how deeply ASSEFA's work is centred on supporting women across many dimensions of village life — through farming initiatives, community development, and microcredit programmes.

I was greatly honoured in 2024 to be invited to the conference after ASSEFA was recognised as a role model for the empowerment of rural women in relation to the United Nations Development Goals for 2030.

In September 2024, my sons and I met Annachi briefly at Kaligudi. As was often the case, he made a series of humorous remarks while remaining entirely straight-faced. He also asked me to say a few words to the assembled gathering of women farmers, which I was pleased to do, speaking on "instances of women talking."

On the same trip, Mr. Kesavan took us to Kariapatti and then to Thonugal, where we were due to meet Annachi later that day, though sadly his return was delayed. Yet, while spending time there — absorbing the sounds of bells, drumming, and chanting;

reading the sign "The Abode of Sacred Souls"; and viewing Annachi's upper room — we gained some sense of the spirit of the place, even in the absence of its chief occupant.

In attempting to fathom the depths of a life understood only partially, and from a distance, I have spent time over these past few days re-reading the reflections and messages Annachi sent during the Covid years and beyond, trying to gather some perspective on his life of humility and service to others.

At the same time, my thoughts have travelled further back — to Gandhi's train journey during which he read Ruskin and arrived at the idea of Sarvodaya; to Vinoba Bhave walking across India collecting land; to the meeting of minds between Giovanni Ermiglia and Annachi in founding ASSEFA in 1969; and to the many streams of support that followed.

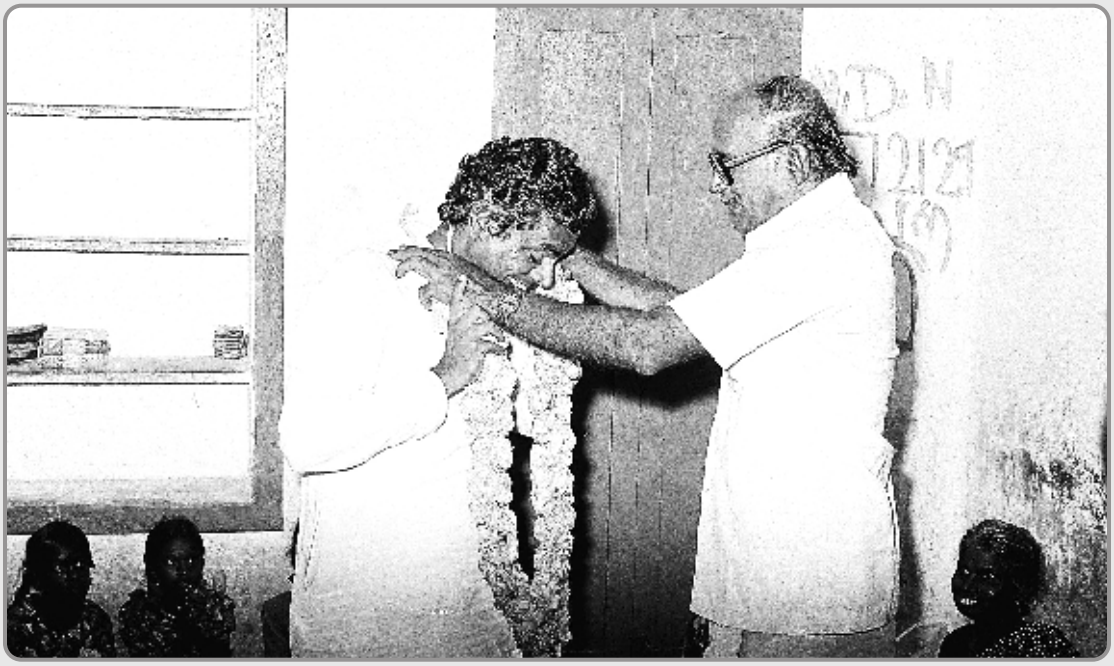
Gradually, I came to understand how ASSEFA views the individual — as a trustee within a self-reliant community, where development is best achieved through collective action, trust, and shared responsibility.

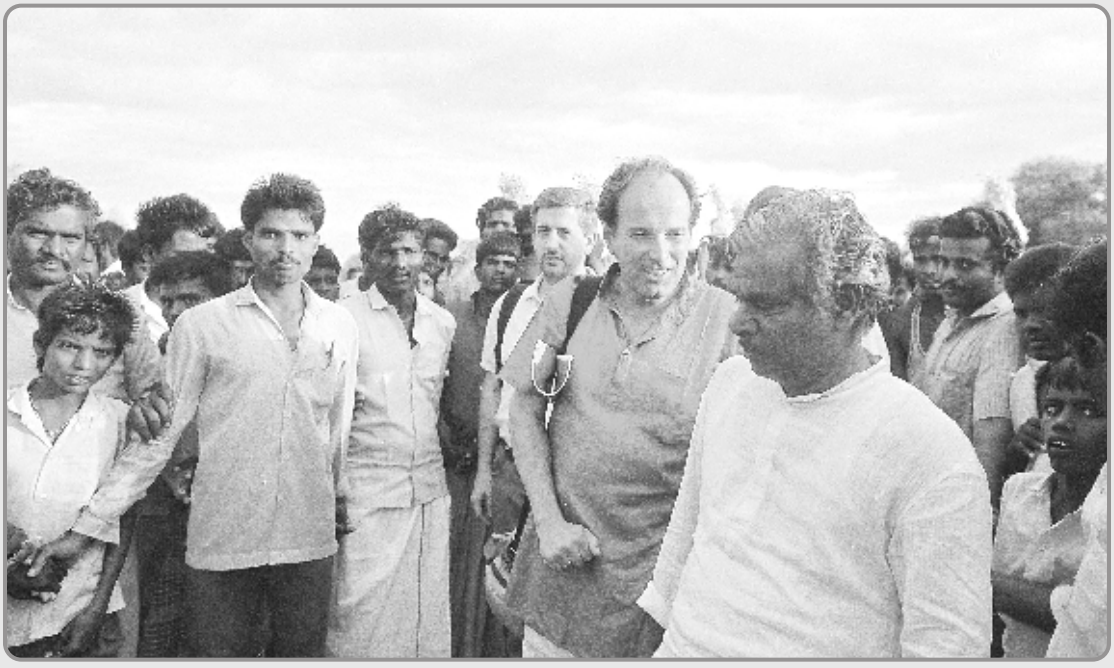
And although Annachi's physical presence will be absent in 2030, the drumbeat of his quietly insistent spirit will still be present throughout.

When I think back to the conference of September 2024, and remember Annachi always seated in the front row, listening to those confident speakers sharing their achievements, I imagine him reflecting upon the long journey behind him. I also imagine the fulfilment and gratitude he must have felt.

A line written in 1932 by C. G. Jung comes to mind:

"Only the autumn can show what the spring has engendered; only in the evening will it be seen what the morning began."







A Legacy of Dignity and Rural Transformation

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11



Silvia

There are individuals whose lives transcend personal achievement and become a quiet yet enduring force for social transformation. Sri Annachi Loganathan ji was one such person — a visionary, a compassionate leader, and a steadfast believer in the dignity and potential of rural communities. Through his work with ASSEFA (Association for Sarva Seva Farms), he dedicated his life to the service of the poor, the marginalised, and the landless, helping to shape one of India's most remarkable grassroots development movements.

Deeply inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, Sri Loganathan ji believed that development could not be measured merely through economic growth, but through human dignity, self-reliance, equality, and social justice. His work was rooted in the Gandhian principle of Sarvodaya — the welfare of all — and throughout his life he remained committed to building communities where solidarity, compassion, and collective responsibility could flourish.

Ms. Silvia *served as the Asia Desk Coordinator at Mani Tese, where she closely followed and supported development initiatives across the region, including the work of ASSEFA. Her commitment to social justice and community development later led her to Bangladesh, where she took up a leadership role with an international NGO. Through her work, she has continued to champion sustainable development, empowerment of marginalized communities, and international cooperation.*



What distinguished Sri Loganathan ji's vision was his understanding that poverty could not be addressed through charity alone. He believed in empowering communities from within — helping rural families organise themselves, cultivate their land collectively, educate their children, strengthen women's participation, and build systems of cooperation and mutual support. Under his guidance, ASSEFA evolved from a rural farming initiative into a holistic development movement encompassing education, women's empowerment, healthcare, microfinance, environmental sustainability, and community self-governance.

At the heart of his philosophy was a profound respect for people. Despite the scale and impact of his work, he remained approachable and grounded, preferring dialogue to authority and partnership to hierarchy. He viewed development not as something imposed from above, but as a process built through trust, participation, and shared responsibility.

Over the decades, ASSEFA became a powerful example of sustainable grassroots development. Thousands of villages and countless families benefited from programmes that promoted self-reliance, education, women's leadership, cooperative farming, and rural entrepreneurship. Yet beyond the numbers and

achievements, Sri Loganathan ji's greatest legacy lies in the lives he transformed — in the confidence restored to vulnerable communities, in the opportunities created for future generations, and in the hope inspired among those who had long been forgotten.

I first met Sri Loganathan ji in 2003, during my first visit to India. At the time, I was a young woman who had recently completed her studies in Political Science and Development Cooperation and had just begun working at the Asia Office of Mani Tese in Milan. Much of my understanding of development cooperation was still academic and theoretical. I had studied policies, frameworks, and international relations, but I still had much to learn about the human dimension of development and the realities of working in the field.

From our very first meeting, I was deeply struck by Sri Loganathan ji's inner strength, calm determination, and clarity of vision. There was something profoundly inspiring in the way he carried himself — with humility, simplicity, and quiet authority. He did not need grand speeches to communicate his values; they were reflected naturally in the way he interacted with people, listened to communities, and approached every challenge with patience and humanity.

Over the following ten years, as I became a regular visitor to ASSEFA through my work with Mani Tese, his presence and guidance became fundamental in shaping both my professional and personal journey. Those experiences helped me understand not only rural development and cooperation practices, but also my own place within the development sector. Through him and through ASSEFA, I gradually realised that development is not merely about projects, indicators, or technical expertise, but above all about dignity, relationships, trust, and respect for people.

Sri Loganathan ji had a remarkable ability to connect vision with action. He embodied values such as solidarity, self-reliance, participation, social justice, and ethical leadership. Observing his work and witnessing the impact he had on communities taught me lessons that no academic institution could ever fully provide. He showed that meaningful development begins with listening, with empowering communities rather than directing them, and with believing in the capacities and dignity of every human being.

For me personally, those years represented an important period of growth and discovery. ASSEFA became much more than a place of work or learning; it became a space where I began to understand the deeper meaning of cooperation and human

engagement. In many ways, Sri Loganathan ji became a mentor and a fatherly figure to me, especially as I had lost my own father many years earlier. His life, his integrity, and his unwavering commitment to service left a lasting impression on me.

After I moved to Bangladesh, we unfortunately lost regular contact and did not have the opportunity to meet again for some years. That is why I remain especially grateful that, in April 2024, I was able to organise a week-long visit to Tamil Nadu and spend meaningful time with him once more.

Despite the passing of time, I found his energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to rural communities completely unchanged. What moved me most was his enduring ability to dream, to imagine new possibilities, and to continue building with the same passion and dedication that had inspired so many people over the decades.

Meeting Sri Loganathan ji again reminded me how rare it is to encounter individuals whose values remain so constant throughout their lives, and whose commitment to social justice and human dignity never diminishes with time.

Looking back today, I realise that my encounter with Sri S. Loganathan ji was not simply an important professional experience within development cooperation. It was a deeply human encounter that left a lasting mark on my life and continues to shape my understanding of development, solidarity, cooperation, and social responsibility. His example, wisdom, and extraordinary dedication to serving others will remain a source of inspiration for me and for countless others whose lives he touched.

Today, as we reflect on his legacy, we remember a man who believed deeply in humanity; a man who saw possibility where others saw poverty; a man who dedicated his life to creating a more just, inclusive, and compassionate society with courage, humility, and purpose.

May his life continue to inspire present and future generations.



A Man of Great Charisma

V
12



Elena Ercole

I met Loganathan ji in August 2019 during my first trip to India, organized by ASSEFA Alessandria ODV.

If it is true that the eyes reflect the soul, then I must say that Loganathan's gaze was eloquent, intense, and infinite—just like his spirit.

After a simple and warm introduction, he welcomed us beneath the shade of a fragrant jasmine tree, asking his staff to offer the thirsty guests freshly opened coconuts. We were immediately captivated by the atmosphere he created. What struck me most was his extraordinary ability to make everyone feel completely at ease.

A man of great charisma, he impressed me with his simplicity and with the quiet awareness that his vision and efforts would continue to benefit countless people. Even today, many still live in the light that shone through his gaze.

Elena Ercole *has been an active member of ASSEFA Alessandria OdV since 2019. She supports the association through translation and communication activities, helping to spread the spirit and mission of ASSEFA and foster solidarity with rural communities in India.*



I would like to end this memory with a sentence I once read on a tombstone in a Catholic cemetery, and which I believe speaks to every faith:

"I shall not wholly die."

The phrase comes from the Latin poet Horace, who believed that one lives on through the lives one has touched and the legacy one leaves behind.

Thank you, Loganathan ji.





Builders of the ASSEFA Movement

1. Vijay Mahajan
2. Ved Mitra Arya
3. P.Rajarathinam
4. S.Olaganathan
5. P.Ashok Kumar
6. G.Navaneethan
7. R.Selvanathan
8. Dr.Saral Thangam
9. T.Balasubramanian
10. S.Muneeswaran
11. R Mahendran
12. R.Gowtham and Nisha Subramaniam
13. R.Kesavaraj



Annachi - 44 Years of Memories

VI
1



Vijay Mahajan



How to condense 44 years of memories in a few pages? Let me begin with this photo from around 1983 or 1984. It had been taken most probably in Natham block, Madurai during one of my trips there. I look so cheeky - a 30-year-old north Indian, trouser clad young man putting his arm affectionately around the shoulders of a dhoti clad South Indian gentleman at least 10 years older than him. And the amused look on Annachi's face, indulging me as always. Whether it was for this photograph or for some new initiative in ASSEFA, I was constantly proposing and Annachi indulgently agreed.

It all began when I first met Annachi during a visit to Madurai in late April 1982 after Deep Joshi, then with the Ford Foundation had introduced me to ASSEFA. I was interested in doing something on the ground with poor people in rural India. Deep had told me about ASSEFA as a Gandhian NGO involved in development of land and water resources for

Vijay Mahajan *is a distinguished social entrepreneur, founder of BASIX, and Chief Executive Officer of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi. Through his pioneering work in microfinance, rural livelihoods, and financial inclusion, he has helped empower millions of low-income households across India. His contributions have played a significant role in advancing inclusive development and social entrepreneurship in the country.*

poor people who had received titles on Bhoodan land. This was land that was collected as voluntary donations from landlords by Vinoba Bhave, a saintly follower of Gandhiji. Vinoba had walked all over India for 14 years and collected over 42 lakh acres of Bhoodan land, to give it over to the landless nearby.

After visiting ASSEFA projects on Bhoodan land around Madurai for a few days in 1982 with Annachi, we talked about what he wanted me to do. ASSEFA had similar projects in Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Due to their distance from Madurai and inadequate local supervision, these projects were not doing well. In particular, the Bihar project was in a crisis as all the funds for it had been spent but the planned outcomes had not been achieved. He wanted me to "go and see what could be done to improve the situation".

I told Annachi that I would be happy to work on the ground in ASSEFA projects in North India. I also told him that I knew many other young professionals like me who wanted to contribute to poverty alleviation and rural development. On the other hand, there were many NGOs like ASSEFA who needed such professional assistance. So, I wanted to establish an organisation which would work with many NGOs. That was the first time Annachi gave me an indulgent smile. He said simply: "Why don't you first work with ASSEFA yourself and show results? Then I will help you to establish such an organisation."

I came back to Delhi and put in my papers. In the middle of August 1982, Annachi came to Delhi and took Mr TK Mathew, ASSEFA Coordinator in Delhi, and me, with him to Gaya where the ASSEFA project for Bhoodan land development had been started in 1980. The local team had exhausted the project's sanctioned budget but not achieved any of the results. Over 40 borewells had been dug; some land was levelled and several diesel pump sets given to farmers, but no Bhoodan land could be brought under cultivation. So, the poor Bhoodan land allottees were still working as landless labourers in the farms of nearby large farmers. To supplement the project budget, ASSEFA had also taken bank loans, and the bankers were beginning to ask for repayment.

It was supposed to be a three-day trip to Gaya, at the end which Annachi had to catch the train to Madras en route Madurai. Mr Mathew went back to Delhi, but I decided to stay back to understand the situation better. A week later, I wrote a long mail, in those days, a handwritten letter by post, to Annachi. I explained that the ground water level had gone down to 40 feet below the surface. The centrifugal diesel pumps could not suck water from more than 27 feet. So, I proposed that we dig sumps (round pits) of 6-foot diameter and 15 foot depth around the borewells. The diesel pump would then be placed at the bottom of the sump, so that the ground water level would be less than 27 feet below it even if the level went down a few feet more. To hold firm, dug-earth sumps would have to be brick-lined.

I also proposed that instead of building large cumbersome earthen channels, known locally as "pynes", we install PVC pipes to take the water from the borewells in the lower part of the land to the highest point and release water from there through gravity flow. All this work required over Rs 5 lakh of additional expenditure, but it would assure the availability of water to all the land and enable cultivation.

Within a week of my reaching Delhi, Annachi conveyed his consent to my proposals. I went back to Gaya with a truckload of PVC pipes and within a month of that, we had revived the first seven borewells in Rajan village. The farmers were so enthused by getting irrigation that they did not wait for any ASSEFA support for levelling their land. For the first time the "taand" (upper fallow) land in Rajan had any crop, leave alone wheat, sown in it. When Annachi visited in January 1983, he saw the brown earth had turned into green fields. He gave me an indulgent smile.

So that was typical of Annachi. He would present the problem that needed to be solved, listen to various suggestions, ignore the ones that he did not think would work, and quietly support the one that would. He would stay out of managing the detail. Once the outcome was visible, he would tell everybody that it was entirely the idea and the work of the person who did it. After just one and a half years in Bihar, Annachi sent me to Italy and Canada to meet various donors and supporters of ASSEFA.

As a result of Annachi's way of working, so many people in ASSEFA were able to do so much - develop thousands of acres of Bhoodan land, dig hundreds of open and borewells, build over a hundred schools, set up five 20000 litre per day milk processing plants, and numerous village industries. More importantly, he was able to build a number of durable institutions – ASSEFA itself, the Sarva Seva Schools Trust, the Sarva Jana Seva Kosh Ltd, the women's self-help group owned NBFC Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd, the Sarva Seva Samiti for village industries, the Seva Milk dairy company, and his first love - Ilakkiya Panni, the Sarvodaya book shop in Madurai, which he took me every time I went to Madurai.

In 1984, after I had finished two years in ASSEFA Bihar projects, I proposed to Annachi that I will start a new project in the Guna district of Madhya Pradesh because it was one of the few districts in the country where there was over 1 lakh acres of Bhoodan land. As always, Annachi gave me an indulgent smile and asked me to "go and see". A month later, Mr Matthew from ASSEFA Delhi and I visited the MP Bhoodan Board in Bhopal. Two days later, we were in Guna with two workers of the Bhoodan Board. They took us to the forested Bamori block on the border of MP and Rajasthan. On the ground, we found that virtually no piece of Bhoodan land had a clear title because each parcel was also claimed by the Revenue department as well as the Forest department of the state Government.

We next met in Wardha. I reported to Annachi what I saw, and he gave me another indulgent smile. "So, what do you want to do?" he asked. I told him "The Bhoodan land was given to very poor people - mostly Bhil and Saharia tribals who lived in the forest. Now the forest has thinned out and, in any case, they are not permitted to do anything in the forest land. So, they badly need to settle down and get some agricultural land. We must help them. So, I will start a campaign for establishing the titles of Bhoodan allotees. I will go and meet the District Collector in Guna." Annachi gave me an indulgent smile.

A year later, I invited Annachi to come to Fatehgarh in Guna district to join us in a padayatra covering 20 villages where we had managed to settle Bhoodan "patta" (title) holders on the disputed lands as an act of Satyagraha, much to the irritation of the local revenue patwaris and forest guards. Annachi came and walked with us for three days through many villages. While leaving, he told me "You are completing Vinoba's work...

By 1986, PRADAN, the organisation of young professionals in rural development, that I had spoken to Annachi about first in 1982, was already three years old and growing. So, I moved from ASSEFA to PRADAN but stayed in touch with ASSEFA. Indeed, three PRADAN professionals were placed in ASSEFA projects, Achintya Ghosh running the Bihar projects; Ved Arya running the Maharashtra and later the Rajasthan projects; and Vasimalai in Madurai. Annachi was the Vice Chairman of the PRADAN Board, and I continued to meet him regularly.

The year 1997 was India's 50th year of independence. Annachi decided to celebrate it as a big event in Madurai. He invited over 1000 farmers and over 100 workers from ASSEFA projects all over the country and another 400 guests from all over India and even some from abroad. A month before the event, he called me and asked me to design and facilitate the event.

I was petrified at the thought of handling 1500 people over a 5-day conference, to be held in the open in the Thamukam ground in Madurai. To top it all, the farmer participants spoke five different languages - Rajasthani Hindi, Bihari Hindi, Marathi, Kannada and Tamil and did not know each other's language. I shared my anxiety with Annachi. Once again, he smiled indulgently and said "Just let the people sit in circles and talk. Farmers understand each other across languages."

So I took his advice and decided that we will divide the 1000 farmers into 100 circles of 10 each. We identified 100 ASSEFA workers and trained them in group process facilitation on the first day. Annachi suggested that in the meantime we should let the 1000 farmers visit the Madurai Meenakshi Temple and the Gandhi Museum. The next three days went off very well. It was a grand sight to see a hundred circles of 11 people

(ten farmers and one ASSEFA worker as facilitator) each discussing issues of agriculture and animal husbandry on the first day, rural industries and savings and credit on the second day, and health and education on the third day.

The guests were all allotted10 groups each. They could go and sit outside the circle and listen to the discussion. After the 4 pm tea break every day, the top ten groups, as rated by the guests, were asked to present their discussion highlights in their language. This was translated in Tamil, as most of the audience was Tamil speaking. The Tamil groups' highlights were translated into Hindi. Sundaresan ji was fluent in both languages, so he was our go-to translator.

I asked Annachi how the conference went. He gave me an indulgent smile and said: "Ever since you told me about how you worked with the Tibetans, I was confident you will be able to run the Conference well." On the last and final day, there was a big procession followed by a cultural show, and then the crowd was addressed by India's President R Venkatraman, who came to the event accepting Annachi's invitation.

Over the next two years I worked with Annachi and Mr V Nagarajan, a very thoughtful chartered accountant, to establish an apex institution for the thousands of poor women's self-help groups (SHGs) that had come up in ASSEFA projects. As SHGs were not legal entities, Mr Nagarajan crafted the concept of Sarvodaya Mutual Benefit Trusts (SMBT), of which the SHGs were constituent members, and the SMBTs were duly registered. The SHGs pooled their savings into the SMBT of their area, and the SMBTs became the shareholders of Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd (SNFL). Thus, SNFL became a unique Non-Bank Finance Company which was 100% owned by poor women. I served on the board of Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd for eight years and continued to meet Annachi regularly in Chennai, Madurai and Pooriyambakkam.

A year after retiring from Basix, I joined as the CEO of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. In one of his trips to Delhi in 2019, I brought him over to the Jawahar Bhawan to show Annachi the exhibition on Gandhiji we had organised as it was his 150th birth anniversary year. Annachi rarely agreed to face the camera, but he indulged my request - to record a video on him in the series I was making on Living Gandhians. Here is the link to it. https://youtu.be/fxA0VnfOhTA?si=xyT65CQlQVkMnORh

In one of my trips to Madurai after COVID-19, Annachi took me to visit a place called Thonugal, about an hour's drive away. There he showed me a plot of land about two acres in size, which a narrow opening on a newly constructed highway. Annachi told me his plans for the place. He would construct a set of shops on the highway side and hall and temple inside. I did not think much of the idea and was surprised to hear that Annachi was going to build a temple. I thought with the coming of age, he was beginning to become religious. I politely did not say much.

A year later, Annachi took me to the same place again. I was amazed at the transformation. What I had seen as an empty plot of land a year ago, by then had many structures on it. In the front were 20 shops. Behind them was an eating place with plenty of seats and parking space. Further behind was a grand temple of Annapoornai Devi. Attached to the temple were several big halls. There were many people including lots of women worshippers in the temple.

Looking at my expression, Annachi smiled indulgently and said: "You see, this place is only an hour away from Madurai, so no motorist would stop here. So, I had to attract people from nearby villages. So, I thought of building a temple of Annapoornai Devi and attracting the women worshippers. Once they come to pray, they also like to do some shopping and some eating out. So, we have provided for shops and an eating place. The halls around the temple are used regularly for marriages and other functions. Now about 60 people are earning a regular livelihood from this two-acre complex." I marvelled at Annachi's deep and practical thinking.



The last time I saw Annachi was in March 2026 in Madurai when Deep Joshi and I met him in the hospital. Within a few minutes of meeting us, he began talking about various development projects that needed to be taken up by ASSEFA. The next day, he asked me to visit the Natham block, which he wanted to convert into a model Sarvodaya block. He wanted to build several rural industries for women. There was already a dairy processing plant in Natham, and 5000 women supplied milk to it. Annachi wanted me to work on a pension plan so that a woman who had supplied milk to the dairy for 10-15 years could earn a steady pension. The following day, Mahendran ji who manages the dairy company, Kumar, and I worked on the idea and met the SBI Mutual Fund manager in Madurai and presented a scheme to Annachi. He heard us out and then smiled indulgently. He mentioned to Ajay, Kumar's son, to bring my packet of muruku which he always gave me when I went to Madurai, or he came to see me.



A Leader, a Mentor and a Teacher

VI
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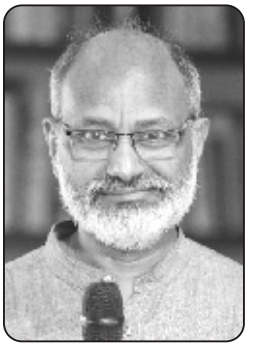


Ved Mitra Arya

Mr. S. Loganathan — or Annachi, as we affectionately call him in Tamil — was the founder and guiding force behind one of India's most influential rural development organisations in India. Though he is no longer with us in body, his spirit of tireless service continues to live on, and his wisdom will continue to illuminate our path for years to come.

Through his life, he showed us what a true development professional could be. Materially, he seemed to possess very little for himself, yet he carried immense richness of character and generosity of spirit.

One of Annachi's greatest strengths was his ability to recognise and nurture talent. Without his generosity and openness, the first generation of PRADANites — including Vijay Mahajan and myself — would never have received our earliest lessons in development work. We benefitted enormously

Ved Mitra Arya *is a distinguished social entrepreneur, founder of SRIJAN, and an Ashoka Fellow recognized for his pioneering contributions to rural development and livelihood promotion. Through innovative initiatives in agriculture, water management, women's empowerment, and community institutions, he has helped improve the lives of thousands of marginalized rural families across India. His lifelong commitment to self-reliance and sustainable development has made him a respected leader in the social development sector.*

from the trust he placed in us. In my own organisation later, I too tried to create similar space for young professionals, though it would be difficult to match Annachi's sagacity and extraordinary eye for talent.

He may not have studied at an IIT or an IIM, but he stood among graduates from such institutions with complete confidence and natural authority. There was never a trace of insecurity in him. He was a born leader.

That confidence came from being deeply rooted — rooted in people, in villages, and in a lifelong commitment to improving the lives of the landless and marginal farmers. His life was anchored in their struggles and aspirations.

One of the most revealing moments for me was during a village meeting in Guna around 1987 or 1988. The discussion was about irrigation for marginal farmers. Vijay and I sat on the dais addressing the gathering, while Annachi quietly sat at the back, observing and listening. He never felt the need to occupy the centre stage. That habit — his quiet attentiveness to people — left a profound impression on me.

Travelling with him was like being inside a living laboratory of learning. Everything he did, everything he said, and even the way he said it became a lesson. Many of those lessons later shaped the way I built SRIJAN from scratch.

Annachi was completely at ease in every situation. He had a wonderful sense of humour and an instinctive ability to connect with people. Before making a serious point, he would often begin with a joke. He always spoke in the language of the listener, whether Tamil or English. Much of this came from his theatre background, and for me it became a lasting lesson in communication and leadership.

What defined him most deeply was his faith in people.

He entrusted me with responsibilities very early in my career and gave me the freedom to grow through experience. That trust shaped me profoundly. It also shaped the way I later built my own organisation.

At one point, he gave me funds to experiment with — almost like a blank cheque. Unlike donors who insist first on elaborate projections, outputs, and impact statements, Annachi trusted people before systems. Our first lift irrigation scheme

failed completely. But instead of losing confidence, we learned quickly, adapted, and developed a different model. Eventually, we were able to provide lift irrigation across twenty villages and train tribal youth to manage the systems themselves.

Another memory remains deeply meaningful to me. A colleague once complained to Annachi that I had used an office jeep for personal purposes. I had honestly maintained a logbook, separately recording office and personal use. But Annachi never questioned me about it. What stays with me even today is the complete trust he showed in me. He dismissed the allegation outright.

It is difficult to describe what such trust does for a young person. It made me commit myself wholeheartedly to the work and to the organisation.

Later, Annachi entrusted me with the responsibility of guiding and managing all ASSEFA projects in North India. I was only thirty years old at the time. The responsibility accelerated my growth enormously, both professionally and personally.

My four years with ASSEFA gave me a grounding that stayed with me throughout life. My thinking became firmly rooted in the realities of rural people, and I found I could relate comfortably to people from every background. I realised this later during my Humphrey Fellowship in the United States, where I interacted with accomplished professionals from Peru, Mexico, Nigeria, Ghana, Thailand, and many other countries. I felt entirely at ease. The same was true later at the World Bank.

In many ways, that confidence came from the mentorship Annachi gave me and the faith he instilled in me.

I am certainly not the only one whose life was shaped by his affection, trust, and guidance. Many of us owe our growth to Annachi. He was a leader, a mentor, and a teacher in the truest sense.

His memory will remain with us always — not only with sorrow, but with immense gratitude.





Annachi, The Great

VI
3



P.Rajarathinam

S. Loganathan, fondly known to all as Annachi, was not merely the Executive Director of ASSEFA — he was a visionary, a mentor, and a guiding star for generations of development workers, including those of us who had the privilege of working alongside him in Kariapatti between 1986 and 1998.

His leadership, dedication to rural development, and unwavering commitment to social transformation inspired countless individuals and institutions. Through his guidance, many community development initiatives gained strength and direction, profoundly transforming the lives of rural families, farmers, women, and the most marginalised communities.

What made Annachi an extraordinary visionary was his rare combination of bold vision and practical wisdom. He possessed an exceptional ability to breathe life into the rural economy through innovative ideas, courageous

P.Rajarathinam *is a senior development consultant who has worked with several development organizations, contributing significantly to community development and institution building. He was closely working with Annachi Shri Loganathan Ji for over twelve years (1986–1998), sharing a common commitment to social transformation and grassroots empowerment.*

decisions, and tireless hard work. Deeply inspired by Vinoba Bhave and J. C. Kumarappa, he demonstrated through action that Gandhian economic development was not merely an ideal to be spoken about, but a practical and sustainable path for social transformation.

Though he built large institutions and initiated ambitious programmes, Annachi himself lived with remarkable simplicity. He worked tirelessly, travelled constantly among villages, and maintained a deep connection with rural communities, especially the landless, narikuravas(nomads), Pudhirai Vannars, and other neglected sections of society. His thoughts, emotions, and actions were always centred on the welfare of the poor and the dignity of ordinary people.

Annachi was highly practical and growth-oriented in his thinking. He constantly sought ways to create sustainable systems that could empower excluded communities. One of his boldest innovations was the creation of Sarva Jana Seva Kosh ("People's Bank") during the late 1980s, a pioneering model that rotated invested funds within rural communities. Through his leadership, the Kosh mobilised more than one hundred crores and later evolved into institutions such as Sarvodaya Nano Finance, Mutual Benefit Trusts, and several other community-based financial initiatives. Many of these became successful and replicable models for development organisations across India.

He also ventured into areas where many organisations hesitated even to begin. The establishment of the ASSEFA Dairy Development Federation, Sarva Seva Educational Trust, and Sarva Seva Gramodhyog Samithi stand as enduring examples of his courage and foresight. The dairy initiative launched in 1996 continues successfully , handling more than 40,000 litres of milk per day. His dream of providing pension support to dairy farmers has now become a reality through the Natham Dairy initiative.

Despite coming from a modest rural background, Annachi had a remarkable understanding of modern organisational systems. He introduced strong monitoring and evaluation practices, systematic documentation, innovative fundraising approaches, and effective institutional management processes within ASSEFA. Yet, even while building large organisations, he never lost the human touch.

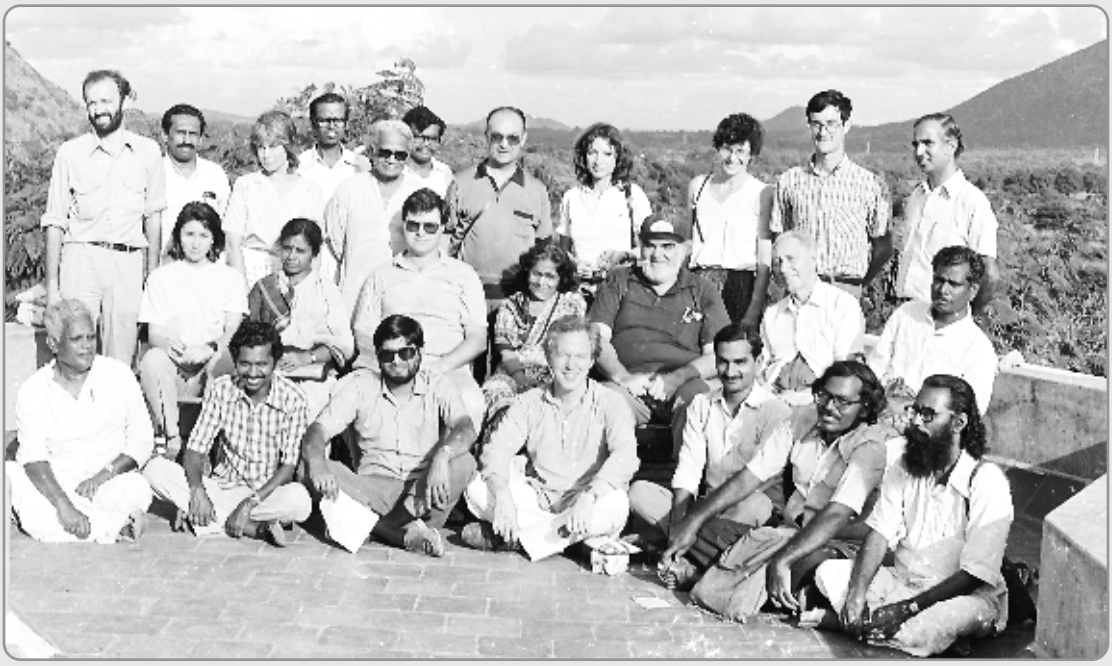
One of Annachi's greatest strengths was his ability to identify capable people and bring them together for a common purpose. He consulted widely, listened patiently, and always sought the best possible solution for the long-term wellbeing of the organisations and the stakeholders. Personal ambition never guided him; the institution and the people always came first.

He also possessed an extraordinary ability to understand people. Even after speaking with someone briefly, he could often judge their strengths, sincerity, and potential. This wisdom enabled him guide a vast organisation with thousands of ground level staff and volunteers while maintaining unity, trust, and clarity of purpose.

Government officials, development professionals, donors, and grassroots workers alike recognised Annachi as a genuine leader of rural transformation. Many government departments willingly collaborated with him, especially in women's development initiatives, because they trusted both his integrity and his vision. At the same time, he remained careful and principled in choosing partnerships.

For me personally, Annachi was far more than an organisational leader. Whenever I faced challenges or difficult decisions, I would turn to him for guidance. Every conversation with him brought clarity, wisdom, and encouragement. He was a mentor, a teacher, a protector, and a constant source of inspiration for all who worked with him.

Today, though Annachi is no longer physically among us, his spirit continues to live through the institutions he built, the ideals he nurtured, and the countless lives he transformed. His legacy remains deeply rooted in the villages, communities, and people he served with such devotion throughout his life.







VI

4

A Development Innovator Par Excellence



S.Olaganathan

Loganathanji, fondly known as Annachi, is no longer with us in physical form. Yet, for the many people associated with him at different stages of life and work, his presence continues through enduring memories, values, and institutions.

Annachi was a keen observer of both people and situations. He possessed a rare intuitive ability to understand organisational and human issues quickly, and his insights seldom failed him while addressing complex challenges.

He was, above all, a development experimenter. Over the decades, he played a pivotal role in facilitating the formation of more than 120 institutions — both large and small — each responding to different local needs and aspirations. Some flourished remarkably, while others remained modest in impact. Yet, at the stage of every idea and initiative, he would encourage the implementing teams to focus not on fear of success or failure, but on the potential impact of the effort and its ease of management at the grassroots level.

S.Olaganathan *is a well-known development consultant and serves on the boards of several development institutions. He has been closely associated with ASSEFA for more than four decades and shares a long-standing friendship with Annachi Shri Loganathan Ji. He is presently the Managing Director of Sarva Jana Seva Kosh (SJSK), an NBFC promoted by ASSEFA, contributing significantly to its growth and mission.*

A true Gandhian in spirit, Annachi strongly believed in reducing unnecessary intermediaries and creating direct relationships between producers and consumers, farmers and markets. I had the opportunity to work with him in operationalising one such initiative in the Kariapatti project area. Drawing from his wide experiences across India, he offered practical and intuitive suggestions that helped us design a workable farmers' market model. That initiative later became a prototype that inspired similar models introduced by some State Governments.

Among his most remarkable institutional innovations were the community-owned and community-managed social finance institutions such as Sarva Jana Seva Kosh and Sarvodaya Nano Finance. Through these initiatives, he attempted to address, in an integrated manner, some of the long-standing challenges of rural development — ownership, control, sustainability, accountability, and development impact. These institutions combined grassroots participation with professional systems and legally sustainable structures.

What distinguished these social finance institutions was their twin approach — combining financial support with patient handholding and fraternal guidance during difficult initial phases. Unlike mainstream financial systems, they recognised the vulnerabilities of emerging community institutions and stood by them until they gained strength and stability. Many institutions within the ASSEFA family that began with social development objectives later evolved into sustainable entities without depending on donor grants or government subsidies.

Personally, Annachi remained unobtrusive and self-effacing throughout his life. In public gatherings, he would often choose to sit in the last row and avoided being photographed whenever possible. He used to say that work must speak for itself, not the individuals behind it.

Once, while recalling his mentor Vinoba ji, he mentioned with humour that Vinoba had suggested his name should perhaps have been "Logsevak" rather than "Loganathan," because his life's work was meant to revolve around service. Vinoba ji had also given him three guiding mantras for his life's mission — Boomatha, Gomatha, and Maatha — Mother Earth, the Cow, and Womanhood. From that point onward, there was no looking back in his six decades of service.

Though deeply rooted in Gandhian ideals, Annachi was also pragmatic and forward-looking. He understood the complexities of changing development paradigms and the growing influence of markets, policies, and global economic forces on vulnerable rural communities. While recognising that market forces were inevitable, he strongly believed that poor communities should not become victims of blind economic

systems. Instead, they should be strengthened through informed decision-making, self-managed community institutions, and supportive partnerships, so that markets could work for the poor rather than against them.

He was deeply concerned about the insecurity faced by rural and unorganised workers. He consistently explored ways to create social safety nets and self-sustaining social security systems — including customised insurance and pension models for poor rural families.

At the heart of all his work was dignity. He never wanted poor people to feel inferior or dependent. This spirit was especially visible in his initiative of community marriages, where economically vulnerable families were supported with goodwill and solidarity, enabling them to begin family life with dignity and social acceptance.

Beneath his gentle and affectionate exterior, however, Annachi could also be firm and uncompromising when it came to values and community empowerment. He would not dilute principles, whether pressure came from donors, institutions, or government agencies. I still remember how one international donor agency eventually redesigned its global accounting procedures to accommodate the realities of empowered community organisations, while still maintaining accepted accounting standards and legal compliance.

I vividly recall an eighth-standard educated village accountant confidently handling responsibilities such as fund requests, comparative statements, procurement processes, stock registers, muster rolls, and cheque issuance based on properly passed resolutions. Such empowerment of ordinary rural people was one of Annachi's greatest achievements.

Though he never displayed spirituality outwardly through ritual or appearance, Annachi possessed a deeply spiritual outlook. Like many true Gandhians, he quietly drew inspiration from timeless spiritual teachings and values. His life was increasingly devoted to public service, often at the cost of personal and family comforts. In many ways, it appeared that he had already entered the spirit of Vanaprastha long before life formally led him there.

And finally, true to the spirit of the Mrityunjaya Mantra, he seemed to leave this world like a ripened fruit gently detaching itself from the tree — peacefully and without struggle.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti.







Annachi The Ideator

VI
5



P.Ashok Kumar

In mid-1980, I was posted as Manager (Commercial & Institutional Division) at SBI, Madurai. SBI had created four business Divisions to attend to their specific requirements. The clients of my Division would be corporates, business entities and institutions like Trusts, Societies, NGOs etc. As I was settling into my role, Mr.Shantiveeran, my Deposit Mobilization Officer suggested that I meet Mr.Loganathan of ASSEFA who was into social and developmental activities and was expecting sizeable funds from foreign donors. Even though main activity of my Division would be granting of loans, focus was shifting to raising of deposits. So, I visited Mr. Loganathan at his Office to canvass for deposits. He briefed me about ASSEFA and its various activities. At that time, his focus was on development of palm tree cultivation. I was quite impressed with his sincerity and commitment to his activities. I promised him whatever support he needed from the Bank.

P. Ashok Kumar *is a seasoned banker who served in various senior positions at State Bank of India and later as Managing Director of Axis Bank. He subsequently joined ASSEFA as Chairman and Managing Director of Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd. (SNFL) and Sarva Jana Seva Kosh (SJSK) and served for more than 6 years.*

After a few months, he told me that he would be going to Canada to meet a Donor. I have a vague remembrance that it was his first foreign visit. (I may be wrong). We helped him with foreign exchange formalities. On his return, he said that the Donor would be visiting Madurai and then make the donation. The Donor came and a function was organized and we were invited. When we went, we had a shock. There was a team from another SBI branch called Agricultural Development Branch (ADB), Madurai. Of course, they were also equally shocked. Then we came to know that they were considering loans to the farmers identified and assisted by ASSEFA.

Next day, Mr. Loganathan came to the Branch and handed over a cheque for Rs.30 lakhs given by the Donor. He said "I know you are after this deposit. And ADB guys are also after this. I leave it to you to decide". I didn't even take a second to respond. I told him "Give the cheque to ADB. Because only they can give loans to the farmers and not me. Anyway, the deposit is going to be with SBI only". Mr. Loganathan heaved a sigh of relief and said "Thanks, you saved me. But don't worry. This amount will be spent immediately. More money will come in tranches. All that is yours and they will be there for a long time"

And, that is how our relationship started – over deposits. As it happens in the Bank, I was transferred and got posted at several places and finally resigned from SBI and joined UTI Bank (which subsequently became Axis Bank), a newly promoted new generation private sector bank in 1994, at Chennai. Being a new bank, garnering of deposits was priority. One day on my usual review of efforts of the Officials, an official said that he met the people from one NGO called ASSEFA. I asked him whether he met Mr. Loganathan. He was surprised and said "yes". Immediately I went to see Mr. Loganathan and he was surprised to see me. We were meeting after a gap of more than 10 years. I dangled a higher rate of interest and got deposits of a few crores.

Even though I went to Corporate Office at Mumbai in 2002, I used to be in regular touch with him as I used to visit Chennai regularly. At his request, I joined the Board of Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd (SNFL) in Jan, 2006. Afterwards, he started asking me to quit the Bank and help him in running SNFL and Sarva Jana Seva Kosh Ltd (SJSK). I couldn't tell him that if I did that, I would be losing substantially by way of ESOPS. But when I retired from Axis in Oct, 2008, I didn't have any excuse and joined SJSK in early 2009 as CMD. And after a few months I became CMD of SNFL also.

When I expressed my uneasiness about the high rate of interest being charged to the poor people (22%pa at that time), he smiled and asked me to go around and explore. I went to the meetings of Women SHG members at several villages and asked them why they were not going to Banks to borrow where the rate of interest would be much lower. The responses were revelations. As the bank branches were not in their villages, they had to shut down their businesses for half of the day or even for a whole day to go to the branches. After waiting for several hours, they would be asked to come on some other day. This would happen repeatedly. Verification of basic documents would also take considerably long time.

Even then, there would not be sanction of the loans. In some cases of sanction, there would be demand for some payment. However, there was different experience with SNFL. The meetings were at their or nearby villages. There was no delay in sanction and disbursement. General consensus was there was not much difference in the real rate of interest if all factors were taken into account. I realized that ease of getting loans and timely receipt of funds was more crucial than the rate of interest being higher, for poor people. This realization led to simplification of Loan Application Form and appraisal process.

I was intrigued by the shareholding pattern of SNFL. The shares were held by Sarvodaya Mutual Benefit Trusts (SMBT). The Women SHGs were the members of SMBTs. When I asked Mr. Nagarajan, Auditor who conceived the structure, he said that it was due to the joint efforts of Annachi, Mr. Vijay Mahajan and himself. Annachi always used to take pride in declaring that SNFL was the only NBFC which was ultimately owned by women. Coming to think of it, this is simply fantastic.

When I suggested some changes in the systems and procedures to improve the functioning of both companies, he gave complete freedom and never interfered.

After the AP crisis of 2010, the availability of funds was strained as the Banks were not willing to extend fresh loans even though repayment was up to date. To come out of the problem at least partially, I made a suggestion. The housing arm of ASSEFA was almost non-functional and was keeping deposits of around Rs.3 cr in Banks, earning interest at 7%. I floated the idea of SNFL issuing Non-Convertible Debentures (NCD) at the interest rate of 12% to which the housing arm could subscribe. While this would increase the income of the housing arm, SNFL would get funds at 3% lower (SNFL

was paying interest at an average rate of 15%). This was a Win-Win situation for both. Initially, Annachi was not comfortable. The concept of NCD was new to ASSEFA and Annachi. He was worried that this money would be lost. I told him that this was a loan to SNFL and as SNFL was meeting all the repayment commitments, this loan would also be repaid. Finally, he saw the merits and agreed. This helped in SNFL staying alive.

Even though my role was limited to managing the two NBFCs, I used to be amazed by the host of ideas and concepts generated by Annachi in several fields. I consider Annachi and Mr. Vijay Mahajan as two of the greatest ideators I have come across.

This is how the relationship changed from canvassing for deposits to active participation in his great activities. This is how Mr. Loganathan became Annachi for me too.





A visionary for empowering women

VI
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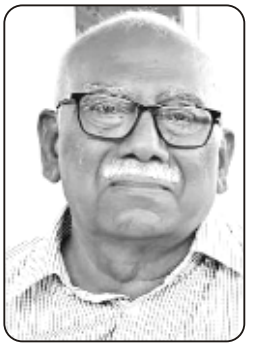

G.Navaneethan

My association with Shri. Loganathan Annachi is almost five decades old.

After completing my post-graduation in Agriculture, I joined bank service in the year 1972. My first posting was as Agricultural Field Officer in Watrap. During that period, I happened to meet a young man riding a Royal Enfield motorbike at Alagapuri Junction on the Watrap –Virudhunagar road.

We introduced ourselves. I was the Field Officer of Union Bank of India, Watrap branch, and Shri Loganathan Annachi was heading ASSEFA's land development programmes in the Erichanatham area.

After a decade, I was transferred to Chennai, and from then on I used to meet Annachi very often at the ASSEFA head office. When the Voluntary Retirement Scheme was announced for bankers, Annachi advised me to take VRS and join the ASSEFA family. I immediately accepted his advice and first joined the Housing Company. Later, he entrusted me with various responsibilities in the

G.Navaneethan *is a Post Graduate in Agriculture. He served in the agricultural college before joining the banking sector and rose to the rank of Regional Manager. After taking voluntary retirement, he joined ASSEFA and contributed in the field of livelihood promoting activities particularly in dairy sector for more than a decade.*



Housing and Dairy departments. I lived and worked with the ASSEFA family from 2001 to 2019.

I travelled thousands of kilometres with Annachi in his car across the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu, visiting villages in the operational areas of ASSEFA. During those journeys, I listened to him explain the various programmes implemented to promote women's empowerment in rural areas.

His long-term vision of empowering women to become self-reliant within their families thrilled me, and I decided to remain with him for as long as possible as part of the ASSEFA family.

Annachi took me to Anand in Gujarat for an on-the-spot study of AMUL Dairy. He also sent me to Varanasi to attend an international dairy conference. I remained sincere and faithful in my work, which Annachi appreciated from time to time. He guided me in all my responsibilities. He was my teacher and Guru throughout my two decades with the ASSEFA family.

Shri Loganathan Annachi was my God. He lives in my heart forever.

I was blessed to see him alive one day before his passing. I pray to the Almighty to bless his soul with Moksha.



My Journey in ASSEFA with Annachi

VI
7



R.Selvanathan

I first met Sri Loganathanji — whom everyone affectionately called Annachi — on 26 August 1991 at the ASSEFA headquarters in Chennai. I still remember the moment vividly. Dressed in a simple white kurta and dhoti, he was seated on the floor in a modest room on the northern side of the building. There was nothing imposing about him, yet his presence reflected simplicity, dignity, and a deep connection with rural India.

The room itself reflected his personality — calm, simple, and thoughtful. Glass-fronted shelves held books, journals, and magazines on development, Gandhiji, and Vinoba Bhave. The atmosphere reminded me strongly of my years at the Gurukulam in Thiruvedakam near Sholavandan in Madurai district. Something about that first meeting deeply moved me. Almost instinctively, I decided to associate myself with ASSEFA as an Accountant at the Chennai headquarters.

R. Selvanathan *is the Executive Director of Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd. (SNFL), an NBFC promoted by ASSEFA. He has been associated with the ASSEFA movement since 1991, serving in various capacities and contributing to its development initiatives under the guidance of Annachi Shri Loganathan Ji.*

Over the years, I slowly began to understand the meaning of development and the realities of village life through ASSEFA's work across six states of India. The organisation had touched countless rural lives, especially women and children, and Annachi stood at the centre of that journey.

He was a rare leader — a person of authority, wisdom, and extraordinary personal commitment. Yet he carried all this with humility. He travelled constantly, spending most of his time among village communities rather than in offices. It was uncommon to find him at the Chennai headquarters for long. He preferred to be with the people, understanding their struggles, encouraging them, and helping bring dignity and hope into their lives.

Even during difficult periods in the organisation's journey, Annachi remained calm and composed. Challenges never disturbed him; he often viewed them as opportunities to turn ideas into meaningful action. He understood both people and institutions deeply, always keeping the wellbeing of the community at the heart of every decision.

To many of us, he embodied the spirit of a true Gandhian leader — simple, disciplined, widely read, compassionate, humorous, and deeply human. We were fortunate to work alongside him and witness a life dedicated to service with humility.

One of Annachi's strengths was his ability to constantly evolve the organisation. Every few years, ASSEFA entered a new phase — introducing innovative services, creating new institutional models, and building independent entities to ensure accountability and sustainability. He often reminded us that ASSEFA's work should embrace every aspect of rural life, covering the many needs of the community.

His meetings were unforgettable. He would begin not with formal agendas, but with a short story, often humorous or reflective. By the end of the meeting, everyone would carry home not just instructions, but also a life lesson.

Under his leadership, ASSEFA created livelihoods and community institutions at multiple levels. Sarva Seva Schools were established with support from child sponsorship programmes. Dairy development initiatives grew from small livestock loans into organised milk procurement and processing systems connecting thousands of women producers to urban markets.

He also conceived the idea that development loans should return to the community itself. Beneficiaries repaid into people's funds, which later evolved into community-owned financial systems supporting other needy families.

A major transformation took place around 1999, when the IFAD-supported Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project came to an end. Thousands of women's Self Help Groups across rural areas still needed continued access to credit and livelihood support. At that critical moment, Annachi helped guide ASSEFA into the next phase of microfinance and livelihood promotion.

Self Help Groups were federated into Mutual Benefit Trusts, specially designed to enable poor women to collectively invest in and own financial institutions. Community funds and grants became the equity base for Sarvodaya Nano Finance Limited (SNFL), a community-owned Non-Banking Financial Company. BASIX, led by Sri Vijay Mahajanji, became an important partner in this process.

This was not merely the creation of another financial institution. It demonstrated that poor rural women could collectively own, govern, and sustain a professional financial system. It was one of Annachi's most significant contributions in community empowerment.

In his later years, Annachi also turned his attention increasingly towards peace, spirituality, and community harmony. This found expression in initiatives such as the Annapoorani Temple near Thonugal in Kariapatti and the Singaravelan Temple at T. Kallupatti in Madurai district. These spaces reflected his belief in peace, non-violence, and collective wellbeing.

Another initiative close to his heart was the organisation of community marriages for poor rural couples who otherwise could not afford to marry with dignity.

Personally, one of the most important phases of my life came in 2019, during a leadership transition at SNFL. I was entrusted with the responsibility of leading the organisation forward. It was a daunting moment for me. Yet Annachi's guidance, encouragement, and trust gave me strength.

Throughout my three decades in ASSEFA and SNFL, I learned from him not merely

administration or management, but how leadership must empower people at the grassroots. His mentorship was never about control; it was about enabling others to grow.

I never imagined that my journey in the social sector would take me to positions of such responsibility. Whatever I became was shaped in large measure by the opportunities, trust, and wisdom that Annachi shared so generously.

Though his physical journey has ended, his spirit continues to guide us. His vision, compassion, courage, and unwavering faith in people remain alive in every institution he built and every life he touched.

Loganathanji (Annachi) may no longer be with us physically, but his life and work will continue to inspire future generations to live with courage, compassion, and service.





VI
8

Simplicity and an Extraordinary Strategic Mind



Dr. Saral Thangam

I first met Annachi — "Uncle" to me — decades ago, when I was still a student at Christian Medical College, Vellore.

He appeared in his characteristic attire: a simple khadi jippa, veshti, and a well-worn shoulder bag. At first glance, one saw only simplicity. But beneath that simplicity was an extraordinary strategic mind, immense clarity of purpose, and a quiet inner strength. His kindness was often veiled behind a subtle, dry humour that made every interaction memorable.

My father, Shri Chandra Paul, who shared a close friendship with Uncle for decades, introduced him to me as a role model whose commitment to community service, discipline, and social transformation was to be admired and emulated. At that stage in life, I understood this only partially. The depth of that introduction revealed itself slowly over the years.

Dr. Saral Thangam *is a distinguished healthcare professional and Managing Director of Norwick Clinical Services, Bengaluru. With extensive experience in clinical research and healthcare management, she has contributed significantly to advancing quality healthcare and ethical clinical practices. Her professional leadership, combined with a commitment to social responsibility, has earned her respect in both the healthcare and development sectors.*





It has taken me many years to begin understanding — though not yet fully comprehending — the relentless dedication with which this multifaceted and complex genius shaped society and touched countless lives around him.

During the many years I spent away from Madurai, I would occasionally meet Uncle whenever he visited our home. One memory that remains especially vivid is watching him meditate every morning with remarkable consistency and stillness. At that age, I remember wondering: how does one truly meditate?

Looking back now, I realise that his life itself was a form of meditation — deeply focused, purposeful, disciplined, and rooted in service.

Uncle also had a beautiful ability to connect effortlessly with children. My daughter, Nandita, fondly remembers having whistling competitions with him — moments filled with laughter, simplicity, and affection.

In the years that followed, it became increasingly clear that Uncle was quietly determined to involve me in the activities of ASSEFA. And once Uncle decided something, resistance was usually futile. In time, I too was drawn into his orbit.

From 2018 onwards, my involvement with ASSEFA — and with Uncle personally — deepened considerably. He always made it a point to keep me informed about meetings, events, and activities, often gently drawing me into greater participation and engagement. Whenever I visited, he would generously make time for me, always encouraging me to understand and participate more fully in his vision.

I deeply cherish the many conversations we shared — discussions on values, the changing social fabric of our times, the future that lay ahead, and the responsibilities of those who choose a path of service.

He was deeply sensitive, extraordinarily kind, and constantly willing to extend himself beyond personal comfort for the sake of others. His understated humour invariably lit up every meeting.

More than anything else, Uncle etched into our hearts the meaning of a life lived in selfless service — not through speeches, but through personal example.

In Uncle's passing, my father has lost a lifelong friend, companion, and fellow traveller. My daughter has lost a beloved whistling partner. And I — along with the entire ASSEFA family — have lost a beloved mentor, guide, role model, and Guru on the path of compassionate service.

May his soul rest in peace.




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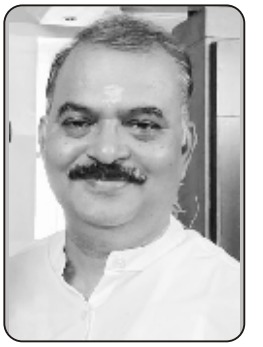
R.M.M



Annachi - A Beacon of Selfless Service

VI
9



T.Balasubramanian

The departure of Sri Annachi Loganathan ji from his mortal presence marks the end of an era. Yet, the light he kindled in the hearts of millions continues to burn with an unwavering flame.

As I sit to pen these reflections, looking back at my 25-year journey with him as a Company Secretary, I realize that while my professional training taught me the intricacies of law, governance, and corporate structuring, Annachi taught me the true soul of an institution.

One of his greatest contributions was the microfinance model of community lending, which aimed to liberate rural women from usurious moneylenders and empower them with financial independence through micro-enterprises.

T. Balasubramanian *is a leading Company Secretary and corporate legal consultant with more than 30 years of professional experience. A trusted supporter of ASSEFA-promoted companies for many years, he has played an important role in providing legal, corporate, and governance guidance to support their growth and sustainability.*

The Architect of Rural Empowerment

Annachi lived a life that was a seamless blend of Mahatma Gandhi's principles and the spiritual activism of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. While the corporate world was only beginning to understand the idea of "inclusive growth" in the late twentieth century, Annachi was already putting it into practice through ASSEFA.

It was he who fought for and obtained one of the first private licenses for a dairy plant in Tamil Nadu, enabling rural women to build sustainable livelihoods through dairy development and cattle ownership.

In my capacity as a Company Secretary, I had the privilege of incorporating several entities and structuring many initiatives under his guidance. What struck me most was his visionary approach to rural development and microfinance. Nearly five decades ago, long before microcredit became a global development model, Annachi pioneered community-based credit systems in rural India. He did not merely see "borrowers"; he saw partners in progress. He understood that for villages to become self-reliant, financial systems had to be owned and managed by the communities themselves.

The Mutual Benefit Trust model we developed under his guidance at Sarvodaya Nano Finance Limited later became widely recognized and replicated in different parts of India.

Professionalizing the Spirit of Service

One of Annachi's most significant contributions to the development sector was his insistence on professionalism. He recognized early that social commitment alone was not enough; institutions serving the poor also needed systems, accountability, and excellence.

This vision led to the initiation of PRADAN — a pioneering professional organization created to support the NGO sector at a time when such an idea was still new. It later became the seedbed for many new-age development organizations across India.

As someone who spent decades working with organizational structures and governance systems, I often marveled at Annachi's ability to channel human energy into institutions that were both compassionate and sustainable. He bridged the gap between grassroots workers and professional administrators, proving that compassion and compliance could coexist harmoniously.

The Power of the "Sathis"

Annachi's faith in the strength of women was deeply transformative. He did not merely speak about women's empowerment; he institutionalized it. By referring to women as "Sathis" — companions and partners — he transformed them from passive recipients of aid into active agents of social change.

I still remember our discussions while structuring initiatives around women-led community assets. His focus was always on wealth creation, not merely poverty alleviation. He wanted rural women to become owners — of land, livestock, savings institutions, and enterprises.

Through the establishment of schools in remote rural areas over several decades, he also ensured that the children of agricultural labourers and poor families had access to education and hope for a better future.

A Personal Mentor and Guiding Lamp

On a personal note, Annachi was my mentor in the truest sense. He helped shape my own professional journey, teaching me that the role of a Company Secretary is not merely to ensure legal compliance, but to safeguard the purpose and values of an institution.

Whenever I faced dilemmas regarding governance, scaling, or institution-building, his advice was always rooted in a pro-poor philosophy. He would often ask a simple but profound question:

"How does this benefit the last person in the queue?"

That question became the North Star of my professional life.

A Legacy That Endures

Today, Annachi's experiments in community asset creation stand as proven models of sustainable rural development.

As I look back at the many institutions incorporated under the ASSEFA umbrella, I no longer see them merely as legal entities. I see them as living monuments to Annachi's vision and service.

He was, and continues to remain, a guiding lamp for the entire ASSEFA family. Though his physical presence is deeply missed, his vision of self-reliant villages, empowered women, and community-owned institutions remains etched into the soil of this nation.

We bid farewell to his mortal form, but we renew our commitment to carry forward the torch of simplicity, service, and professional integrity that he upheld for more than half a century.

Pranams to the great soul.





Annachi : My Mentor

VI
10



S.Muneeswaran

Ever since I joined this prestigious organisation, I have seen our Annachi in many roles — as a leader, Executive Director, mentor, trainer, teacher, and friend. He was truly a Dasavadhani — a person of many abilities. I had the privilege of working with him for nearly four decades and learned immensely from him. I would like to share a few important experiences in which I was fortunate to be part of the journey.

A Life-Saving Vision

During the 1990s, in one of our Sarva Seva Schools at Anambakkam village in Uthiramerur, I noticed a student who appeared unusually weak and walked very slowly. When I enquired, the Headmaster, Mr. Anandhan, informed me that the boy was suffering from a heart problem.

S.Muneeswaran *is a postgraduate and a dedicated development professional who joined ASSEFA soon after completing his studies. As Program Director for Education in the Uthiramerur and Madurantagam regions, he has devoted more than 35 years to advancing children's education and community development under the guidance of Annachi Shri Loganathan Ji.*

I met the boy's parents and requested the medical records from the Government Hospital. The parents broke down in tears and pleaded for help. At that time, ASSEFA had a health referral arrangement with Dr. Muthukrishnan in Chengalpet, and the student was referred there. He was later examined by the cardiac specialist Dr. Punchamoorthy, who informed us that the boy's condition was critical and that he might not survive for long. Sadly, within fifteen days, the child passed away. We later learned that he had been suffering from rheumatic fever.

This incident deeply moved all of us. We immediately organised medical screening camps for students and parents across thirteen schools. During the process, seventy-two people were identified with serious cardiac conditions. Dr. Punchamoorthy estimated that nearly one crore rupees would be required for surgeries and treatment.

We shared the matter with our Executive Director, Sri Loganathanji. Annachi immediately asked us to prepare an appeal note for support. Through his initiative, the appeal reached Plan International, and nearly eighty lakh rupees were mobilised. With this support, open-heart surgeries were performed for forty-two patients, and even a pacemaker was implanted for a patient from Sadachivakkam village in Uthiramerur Taluk.

Today, many of them continue to live healthy and dignified lives, earning for their families and standing on their own feet. This unforgettable effort became possible because of Annachi's compassion, vision, and timely action.

A Wise Administrator

In the early 1990s, a group of non-cooperating workers formed trade unions within the Uthiramerur, Viralimalai, and Natham projects. ASSEFA was built on the spirit of voluntary service and commitment to rural communities, but the situation slowly began to affect the organisation's development work.

At that difficult moment, only a handful of us remained fully aligned with the organisation, while many others were involved in agitation. We reported the matter to Annachi.

He listened patiently, reflected deeply, and then gave a simple yet powerful direction. He instructed that staff should be made accountable directly to people's forums such

as Gram Sabhas and School Committees. Staff members would henceforth submit their reports to these community bodies and receive their salaries through the same process.

This single decision transformed the atmosphere completely. The tensions slowly dissolved, and the organisation regained its balance. Through this, we witnessed Annachi's remarkable administrative wisdom and his deep belief that institutions must remain accountable to the people they serve.

The Birth of the People's Bank

One day, while walking through a village, Annachi met a shepherd woman and gently asked about her life. With tears in her eyes, she shared that she was about to sell all her goats to pay for her husband's medical treatment. Those goats were her only source of livelihood, and she feared for her family's future.

That conversation stayed deeply with Annachi. He reflected on the helplessness of poor families who had no access to timely financial support. From this concern emerged the idea of Gram Kosh — a village savings and support system.

This vision later grew into the Sarva Jana Seva Kosh, established under RBI regulations as a people's financial institution. Villagers themselves became shareholders, enabling poor families to access financial assistance with dignity and repay it gradually. Even today, the Kosh continues to function successfully with more than forty thousand members.

This initiative reflected Annachi's rare ability to understand the language and struggles of the poor. He always listened carefully to the unheard voices of rural people and transformed their pain into meaningful institutions.

A Guiding Light

My humble request to all ASSEFA-ites is that we continue to carry forward Annachi's message, values, and programmes for generations to come. Though he is no longer physically with us, his spirit continues to guide us like a shining Southern Star.


SriMURUGAN
MDU.7.



Annachi Spirit Lives in Natham

VI
11

R.Mahendran



Annachi's vision was deeply rooted in Gandhian ideals of equality, non-violence, and village self-reliance. He believed that real development happens when communities themselves participate in decision-making and work together for common progress. His approach encouraged cooperation, dignity, and shared responsibility among rural communities.

Because of his dedication and leadership, ASSEFA grew into one of India's leading grassroots development organisations, positively impacting millions of rural residents across several states. His life and work continue to inspire efforts toward sustainable rural development and community-centred social transformation.

Sarvodaya, the Sanskrit term meaning "Welfare of All," reflects the vision of inclusive and holistic development. During the last three years of his life,

R.Mahendran, *a graduate, joined ASSEFA soon after completing his studies and has served the organization in various capacities for more than 35 years. He is currently the Managing Director of Shantigram Dairy Promotion Company, leading initiatives that provide sustainable livelihoods to over 6,000 rural families through a comprehensive dairy development programme.*



Annachi lived in Natham, deepening his commitment to rural transformation rooted in Gandhian philosophy.

Natham became one of the pioneering integrated projects of ASSEFA. The first Sarva Jana Seva Kosh branch and the first Sarva Seva Gramodhyog Samithi outlet were established there. Around 31 well-organised and successful schools are functioning in the region, and strong Community-Based Organisation (CBO) structures were created across Natham.

Annachi's dream was to transform Natham Taluk into a Sarvodaya Block — a model region founded on self-reliance, inclusive rural development, and community participation.



Annachi's dream for Tamilnadu's Coastal Communities



Gowtham Reddy & Nisha Subramaniam

A team of educators from Teach For India Chennai had travelled to Pooriyambakkam for a leadership forum. It was a beautiful early morning, and as we lined up for breakfast, an elderly gentleman stood behind the vadai counter, serving hot urad dal vadas. Dressed simply in a dhoti and khadi shirt, he insisted that each of us take more than one.

"I made these *vadais*," he said with a smile. "Are they crispy and nice?"

We thanked him and happily accepted second helpings.

A little later, as the forum began, we were surprised to see the very same gentleman walk up to the front of the gathering, as the keynote speaker.
This was our first meeting with Annachi.

Gowtham Reddy *and* ***Nisha Subramaniam*** *are passionate education leaders who, after their journey with Teach For India, chose to serve rural communities in Tamil Nadu through ASSEFA Schools in Cuddalore district. Through Kanavu, they have transformed educational opportunities for over a thousand children in remote villages by strengthening schools, teachers, and leadership.*

Over the next hour, he spoke about a wide range of things:of villages, women, children, Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, land, dignity, education, and the future. His mind moved effortlessly between philosophy and practice. Towards the end of his talk, he paused and asked a question.

"I have a few schools to give away. Who will run them?"

The room burst into nervous laughter. Most of us looked around, waiting for someone else to answer. Annachi laughed too.

"A few minutes ago, when I offered you one more vadai, nobody hesitated. I offered them with love and everyone happily took two or three. Now I am offering you a school, and suddenly everyone has become very quiet."

The room erupted again. But beneath the laughter was a challenge. If we were willing to receive, were we willing to take responsibility? If we believed education mattered, were we prepared to dedicate our lives to it? That question stayed with us long after we left Pooriambakkam. Looking back, it changed the course of our lives.

A few months later, we met Annachi at the ASSEFA office in Chennai. It remains one of the most unusual interviews we have ever attended. He did not ask us about qualifications or achievements. Instead, he asked us to tell him our life stories. Where had we come from? What had shaped us? What kind of schools would we build if we were given the opportunity? What did we believe children deserved?

He listened patiently. At the end of the conversation, he simply said, "I can give you these schools to work with. But you must commit to living with the people."

In April 2017, we moved to Kannarapettai, in Cuddalore. It has been our home ever since.

As we settled into the work, we began to understand the story behind the ASSEFA schools in coastal Cuddalore. These schools were born from a bold dream: to bring quality education to some of the most remote villages along the coast, many of which had been devastated by the 2004 tsunami. We met people who had travelled from village to village with Annachi during those difficult years. They spoke of long days spent listening to families, understanding their realities, and asking a simple question: "What do you need?" From those conversations emerged a vision that went



far beyond rebuilding infrastructure. These schools sought to create spaces of education, dignity, health, opportunity, and hope.

In 2018, when Dravina Seenivasan , another Teach for India Chennai Alum joined us , he welcomed her with a question, " Will you make this your life 's mission?"

Over the years, Annachi has become one of our most important teachers, in the space of rural development.

He was always available. He answered our calls or returned them promptly. Some of our fondest memories are of his unannounced visits to our campus. He would sit in our kitchen and relish the simplest meal with genuine delight, asking how a particular dish was prepared with the same curiosity and attentiveness with which he asked about our work. He arrived quietly, listened deeply, and somehow left us with enough questions to think about for months.

We spent long hours discussing education. What should schools really be for? What matters most for children? How do schools serve women, families, and entire communities? His understanding of the coastal villages was astonishing. Again and again, he pushed us to look beyond programmes and projects and to understand people more deeply.

Once, he asked us, "When will people listen to you?"

Before we could answer, he continued.

"When they see you struggle, they will feel convinced to listen to you. If Gandhi had not fasted, millions would not have been moved by him."

He had hundreds of such insights. Deeply rooted in the principles of Sarvodaya, he wore his philosophy lightly on his shoulders. Whenever we approached him with uncertainty, he rarely offered direct answers. Instead, he encouraged us to continue the work.

"Keep working," he would say. "The answers will appear when they must."

His presence grounded us. It taught us to place our energies fully into the work, to act with courage, and to trust that clarity often emerges through action.

Every visit seemed to end with another question.

"What have you really achieved in all these years in Cuddalore?" he would ask, his eyes twinkling with curiosity and wisdom. It was never a question that diminished us; it strengthened our vision. Year after year, he helped us think more deeply about what schools could become.

"Let children come to school freely, without bags," he would say. Today, the " No bag Saturdays" we run in our schools remain the happiest days of the school calendar.

On another occasion, he visited our women's sewing centre. He spent time observing the women at work. As he was leaving, he stopped and said:

"A place where so many women work should have a mirror."

We were puzzled.

"They rush here after finishing all their work at home," he explained. "They may not even have a minute to look at themselves. Give her a mirror. Give her a small space and a moment to stand and see herself. She will begin to belong here." There is a mirror in the centre today.

Every time we see it, we think of Annachi. His understanding of rural women and children was profound. He noticed things that most people overlooked. He understood dignity in its smallest expressions.

One of our school campuses has a banyan tree planted by Annachi. He would often ask us about it and encourage us to watch it grow. As years went by, we realise that the tree was never just a tree. It was his gentle way of strengthening our commitment to this place. A reminder that meaningful work requires roots. A reminder to stay. To grow. To build patiently over a lifetime.

When news of his passing reached us, we found ourselves returning to the many questions he left behind. We thought about the schools, the women, the children, the villages, the banyan tree, the mirror, the vadai, and the countless conversations that somehow always left us seeing the world a little differently.

Annachi belonged to a generation that believed another world was possible and then spent an entire lifetime building it. Across villages in Tamil Nadu, there are thousands of lives that carry his imprint. We are privileged to be one among them.

We believe that someone like Annachi never truly leaves the spaces he built with conviction.

We see him in the spreading branches of the banyan tree. In the tall palms swaying along the coast. In the freedom of the Cuddalore breeze. We see him in the smiles of children running eagerly into school each morning; in the faces of women who pause before a mirror and recognise their own dignity.

Most of all, we see him in the quiet conviction that deep commitment to work can transform lives and communities.

We can almost hear him still:

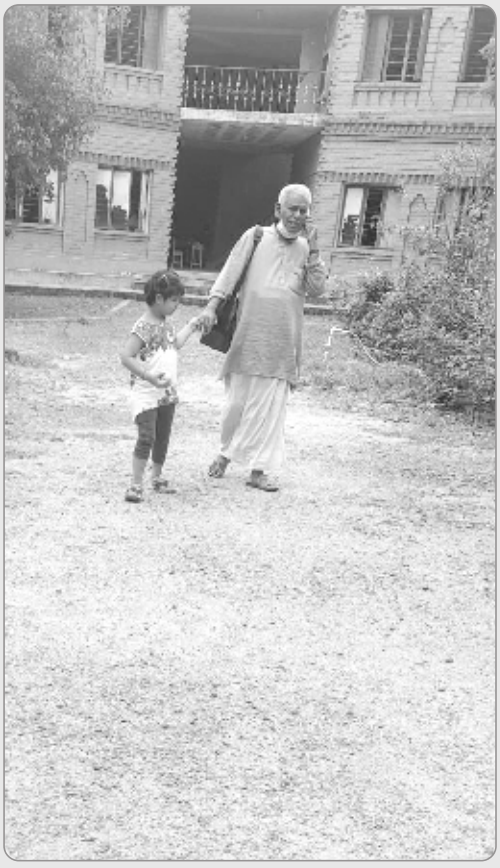
"Keep working. The answers will appear when they must."

For nine years, those words have steadied us.

They will continue to do so, for several more decades to come.





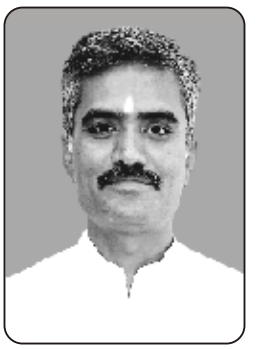




The spirituality I knew in Annachi

VI
13

R.Kesavaraj



In 2004, I was at a crossroads in life. Drawn deeply toward a spiritual path, I had decided to leave home and dedicate myself entirely to that journey. At that moment, my family brought me to Annachi.

From then on, wherever Annachi travelled, he took me along with him.

What astonished me most was his extraordinary ability to connect with every kind of person. He could speak to accountants as one of them, converse with scholars and intellectuals with ease, engage poets as a poet, writers as a writer, farmers as a farmer, and professors as a professor. Watching him, I began to understand the true essence of spirituality.

R.Kesavaraj, *a postgraduate, joined ASSEFA 22 years ago and has served in various capacities within the organization. He has been the Chief Executive Officer of ASSEFA Livestock Producers Company, Kariyapatti, since its inception, playing a key role in its growth and development. He also oversees the management of two schools in the region, reflecting his commitment to both livelihood promotion and education.*



In 2009, my family once again approached Annachi. They were concerned that I did not wish to marry and requested him to counsel me. As a result, I eventually returned to Madurai and fulfilled my family's wishes. After marriage, I was no longer able to travel as extensively with Annachi as before, but under his guidance I continued to work closely with farming communities in Thandikudi and Kariyapatti.

In 2013, I was entrusted with the responsibility of the ASSEFA Dairy Producers' Organization in the Kariyapatti region. There, I witnessed firsthand how ASSEFA's work was transforming the lives and livelihoods of rural people. I saw how countless development initiatives were improving the economic well-being of villages and helping families move toward a more secure and dignified future. More importantly, I saw the real impact of those efforts in people's everyday lives.

Yet a question continued to remain in my mind:

"Spirituality or ASSEFA?"

Over time, I discovered the answer.

Within ASSEFA's work, I found spirituality itself.

In 2019, one of Annachi's long-cherished dreams took shape through the establishment of the Annapoorani Temple, founded on the principle that food should be available to all. Through this initiative, I saw once again how deeply spirituality was woven into ASSEFA's work and vision.

Gradually I realized that the question was never "Spirituality or ASSEFA?"

For Annachi, there was no separation between the two.

Today, with Annachi's blessings, I continue my work carrying spirituality through ASSEFA's mission and ASSEFA's mission through spirituality. In that journey, I remain guided by the values he lived and the example he left behind.



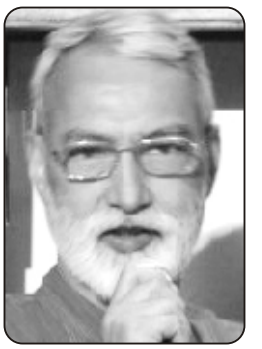


Friends, Well-wishers and Fellow Travelers

1. Deep Joshi
2. P.V.Rajagopal
3. Mathew Cherian
4 Dr. K.Panchaksharam
5. K.Ramanathan
6. Anil Kumar
7. N.V.Ramana
8. Dr. Jill Carr-Harris
9. Muthuvelayatham
10. Prof. Somnath Ghosh
11. L.Ganesh Moorthy
12. L.Arunagiri



Only the Soul is Mine



Deep Joshi

Several years ago, Annachi — one of the most generous and accomplished teachers in my life — shared a story in one of his periodic "Communications", as he called them, offering it as "food for thought and reflection." It came around Teachers' Day, perhaps by coincidence. Yet the story seemed to capture the essence of a true Karmayogi — very much like Annachi himself. Today, it feels like a fitting tribute to his life.

I narrate the story here as I remember it.
An old man sat on the bank of a river, quietly watching the gentle flow of water. His body bore deep wounds, some still raw and bloodstained. Yet there was no sign of pain on his face. Every now and then, he would look up at the birds crossing the sky and laugh heartily.

Deep Joshi *is a pioneering rural development professional and co-founder of the PRADAN, an organization dedicated to improving the livelihoods of India's rural poor. He received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for his outstanding contribution to grassroots development and community empowerment. His work has inspired generations of development practitioners through its focus on self-reliance, equity, and sustainable livelihoods.*

A fisherman nearby, curious and concerned, approached him and said, “My friend, your body seems to be in terrible condition. Surely you must be suffering. Why don’t you go to a doctor?”

The old man laughed and replied, “You say this is my body? No, it does not belong to me. It was gifted to me by my parents, who nurtured it. Whatever happens to it is its own problem, not mine.”

Surprised, the fisherman said admiringly, “You must be a very wise man.”

“No,” the old man replied calmly, “the knowledge or wisdom you speak of is not mine either. It is a gift from society.”

Now irritated, the fisherman wondered whether the old man was mad rather than wise. Half teasingly, he asked, “Then do you possess anything at all that is truly your own?”

“Oh yes,” the old man replied gently. “Only the soul is mine.”

He continued:

“It is like a crystal — pure, without blemish or mark. Whatever happens around me, around my body, whether good or bad, for me or against me, does not affect it. The soul remains with me, carrying me onward forever.”

Annachi later wrote that this story was not his own creation, but had been narrated to him by a middle-aged unmarried farmer whom he had met while working in villages in his quest to “blend the crazy idea of spiritualism with development.”

He was deeply concerned, he wrote, that “farmers are losing their connection with Mother Earth, abandoning their farms like an unwanted old woman and moving toward other vocations.”

The two became friends while working together to revive the land — planting trees, mobilising farmers, bringing villagers together in forums, and encouraging others to support their efforts. Annachi said that his farmer friend concluded the story with these words:

"The beauty of the world lies in its inherent differences — good and bad, birth and death, winning and losing, hoarding and sharing, cheating and fairness. These opposites will always exist together. Yet when they are woven together like flowers in a garland, they create a glittering beauty."

I first met Annachi in August 1981 through sheer serendipity. The two and a half days I spent with him, visiting ASSEFA projects in the then undivided Madurai district, shaped much of what I later became professionally.

Annachi readily agreed to host my own "crazy idea" — building an organisation that would bring young professionals into rural India so they could "share with society the knowledge and wisdom they had received from her."

A year later, Vijay Mahajan joined ASSEFA as the first young professional to incubate that idea. Thus PRADAN was born in the cradle of ASSEFA on Bhoodan Day in 1983, with Annachi serving as its founding Vice Chair.

Many young professionals in the early years of PRADAN learned the practice of village development work within ASSEFA projects across the country under Annachi's guidance. To both Vijay and me, Annachi was a pillar of strength — not only to a fledgling organisation, but also to the "crazy idea" itself.

Vijay and I visited Annachi in Madurai on 15 and 16 February this year, after learning about his illness. I feel deeply blessed that we did.

It was such a joy to see him again. Like the old man in his story, Annachi showed no trace of pain, no complaint, no grievance that a life-threatening illness had come his way. He was the same Annachi I had first met in 1981 — always thinking about the poor, always concerned about what more could be done for them.

I had hoped he would overcome his illness, and I promised to visit him again. But that was not to be.

His was a truly blessed life — a life dedicated to Antyodaya, a life that brought dignity, hope, and cheer to millions.

May peace be upon your soul into eternity, Annachi.


விவசாயம்

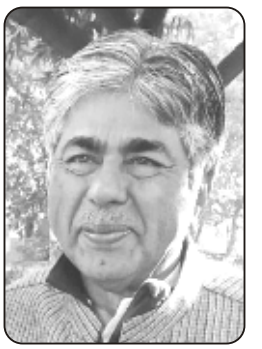

விந்தை உலகம்



VII
2

A Man of Great Stature, Vision and Simplicity

P.V.Rajagopal



The passing of Shri Loganathan ji of ASSEFA is a profound loss not only to the Gandhian movement but also to all those who believe in rural transformation rooted in justice, simplicity, and human dignity. He was one among the rare social leaders whose life itself became a message. At a time when social work is often accompanied by publicity and personal ambition, Loganathan stood apart from the crowd. He quietly dedicated himself to constructive work and remained deeply committed to the ideals of the Bhoodan and Sarvodaya movements.

Shri Loganathan represented the true spirit of Gandhian rural development. He did not merely speak about Gandhian philosophy; he lived it in practice. His work through ASSEFA demonstrated that sustainable rural development is possible when it is centered on people, self- reliance, cooperation, and dignity of labor. Villages under his guidance became examples of how communities can organize themselves through collective effort and mutual trust. His initiatives in

P. V. Rajagopal *is a renowned Gandhian activist, founder of Ekta Parishad, and a leading advocate for the rights of landless and marginalized communities. Through nonviolent mass mobilizations and grassroots action, he has championed equitable access to land, water, and natural resources across India. His lifelong commitment to social justice, peace, and sustainable development has earned him national and international recognition.*

agriculture, dairy development, women's empowerment, education, and village institutions reflected a deep understanding of grassroots realities.

One of the most admirable qualities of Loganathan was his simplicity. In his personal life, he practiced what many others only preached. He lived modestly, maintained humility in all interactions, and never allowed fame or influence to change his lifestyle. His simplicity gave him moral strength and credibility among the rural poor. Villagers trusted him because they saw in him a person who genuinely cared for their welfare and shared their struggles. This simplicity also inspired countless young social workers who looked at him as a living example of Gandhian values.

At the same time, Loganathan was never rigid in his thinking. He possessed the rare ability to adapt approaches to rural development according to changing times and circumstances. While remaining rooted in Gandhian principles, he understood the importance of innovation, organizational efficiency, and practical solutions. He carefully shaped ASSEFA into a dynamic institution capable of responding to new social and economic challenges faced by rural communities. His leadership showed that Gandhian development is not outdated; rather, it remains deeply relevant when applied creatively and sincerely.

Despite his popularity and the wide recognition he earned across India and abroad, Loganathan consciously kept a distance from the political process of the state. This was a remarkable aspect of his character. In an environment where many social leaders eventually become absorbed into political structures, he remained firmly committed to people-centered constructive work. His independence allowed him to retain the trust of ordinary villagers as well as social movements across ideological lines. He believed that genuine social transformation begins from the grassroots and not merely through political power.

The international community also recognized the sincerity and integrity of his work. His simplicity and focused commitment attracted many international organizations and friends from different parts of the world. They trusted him and ASSEFA with financial support because they knew the resources would reach the people for whom they were intended. This trust was not built through public relations campaigns but through decades of transparent and dedicated work. Loganathan showed that honesty and commitment are the strongest foundations for international solidarity.

What made Loganathan truly different from many others was the extraordinary combination of simplicity, hard work, and unwavering commitment to the cause. Such leaders are not created overnight. It takes generations of social struggle, moral discipline, and community engagement to shape a committed social leader. We can indeed be proud that Shri Loganathan emerged as one of those rare personalities who carried forward the spirit of Bhoodan and Sarvodaya in modern India with authenticity and courage.

Shri Loganathan also shared a close and affectionate association with CESCI in Madurai. His support in organizing the Ahimsa Santhai will always be remembered with gratitude. Over the years, many visitors associated with CESCI made it a point to visit the ASSEFA Natham SEVA Milk Project to understand grassroots rural development in practice. These visits became important learning experiences for many national/international guests and young activists.

Organizations such as Action Village India (UK) often brought together Ekta Parishad, ASSEFA, and several other partner organizations. Through such collaborations, Loganathan built lasting friendships with people from different countries and cultures. His warmth, humility, and dedication touched the hearts of many across the world. I am certain that his friends and well- wishers in different parts of the globe will deeply miss him.

Yet, even though Shri Loganathan is no longer physically with us, his inspiration will continue to vibrate in society for a long time. The institutions he strengthened, the villages he transformed, the people he empowered, and the values he upheld will continue to guide future generations. His life reminds us that meaningful change is possible when one works with sincerity, patience, and faith in people.

In remembering Shri Loganathan, we are not only paying tribute to an individual but also reaffirming our commitment to the ideals he represented. His journey stands as a beacon of hope in a world often driven by selfishness and competition. He showed us that another path is possible, a path rooted in compassion, simplicity, justice, and nonviolence.

May his legacy continue to inspire social workers, rural communities, and all those striving for a more humane and equitable society.


அசோ சமூக மத நல்லிணக்கத் திருமணவிழா





A Real Karmayogi

VII
3



Mathew Cherian

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948, at Birla House — now known as Gandhi Smriti. Two months later, many of Gandhi's closest followers gathered at Sevagram in Wardha to reflect on the future of the nation and the unfinished work of Gandhian thought.

Among those assembled — alongside Jawaharlal Nehru, Jamnalal Bajaj, and several other national leaders — was a young Gandhian named Loganathan.

From that historic gathering emerged the Wardha Declaration: a collective commitment to work toward Gram Swaraj, the vision of self-reliant village republics that Gandhi had dreamt of for India. It was from this spirit that the Sarva Seva Sangh was born.

Loganathan was among its youngest workers.

Mathew Cherian *is HelpAge Global Ambassador on Ageing and a respected leader in the international development sector. Formerly Programme Director at Plan International, he has devoted his career to advancing the rights, dignity, and well-being of vulnerable and marginalized communities around the world.*

Later, when Acharya Vinoba Bhave launched the historic Bhoodan Movement, Loganathan walked beside him. Land donated by landlords had to be developed and made meaningful for Dalits and marginalized communities living on the fringes of village society. From this effort emerged ASSEFA — the Association of Sarva Seva Farms.

In 1996, Loganathan — affectionately known to everyone as "Annachi" — would often recount these stories from the past. He would speak about how he began as a tourist guide at the Meenakshi Temple before deciding to dedicate his life to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and later Vinoba Bhave.

Annachi went on to build ASSEFA across several parts of India — including Bihar (Gaya), Rajasthan (Udaipur), Ramanathapuram, Kariyapatti, Kallupatti, and Uttiramerur in Chengalpattu district. He was a true institution builder who spent nearly two hundred days each year on the road, travelling tirelessly from village to village.

A real Karmayogi.

I had the privilege of listening to these stories during the years I served as Programme Director at Plan International. We travelled often together on his favourite route — the overnight bus from Madurai to Chennai. Through those long journeys, filled with endless conversation, we developed a rare friendship.

Annachi spoke freely about people in the development sector, their strengths, peculiarities, and contradictions. Beneath all those conversations was his unwavering commitment to Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj and community self-governance.

One of his most remarkable ideas emerged long before microfinance became globally fashionable.

He believed that every village should have its own Gram Kosh — a community development fund owned and managed by the people themselves. Villagers would pool their savings into a collective fund that could support their own development priorities. This was conceived well before the rise of institutions such as the Grameen Bank or SEWA Bank.

For Annachi, true Swaraj meant this:
people managing their own resources and shaping their own future.

With extraordinary foresight, he helped establish Gram Koshes across Tamil Nadu and Gaya. Many leaders who later became prominent in India's microfinance movement learned from him.. In many ways, Annachi became a quiet architect behind several later development movements in India.

As ASSEFA grew into one of India's most influential voluntary organizations, Annachi himself remained profoundly simple.

He continued to travel mostly by bus. Though invited to many international conferences, he often preferred to send senior colleagues like Ganesan or Rajarathinam instead of going himself. He was practical, grounded, and completely untouched by status.

I still remember arriving at the Madurai bus stand after overnight journeys and sharing steaming hot idlis with him at dawn — his favourite meal.

Though he did not write extensively, he possessed a deeply philosophical mind. Once, he organized a major international conference at Natham on global sustainability. Friends and colleagues from France, Italy, Switzerland, and Britain attended the gathering.

At that conference, Annachi spoke passionately about the urgent need to build sustainable communities and organize ourselves collectively to protect the earth.

Long before most of us had even begun discussing climate change, he had already understood the dangers the future held.

With his passing, we have lost a true philosopher, teacher, guide, and champion of humanity.

But Annachi's ideas — and the extraordinary simplicity with which he lived them — will remain in my heart forever.

He will be missed deeply.





Annachi - My Elder Brother

VII
4



Dr. K.Panchaksharam

Sri S. Loganathan, fondly called Annachi, was the Executive Director of ASSEFA, a visionary leader, and a guiding star for countless development workers, including those of us who had the privilege of working with him.

For me, Annachi was much more than an organisational leader. He was an elder brother, mentor, friend, and source of inspiration. My association with him began in 1969 and continued for more than six decades. During all these years, I witnessed at close quarters a man whose life was completely dedicated to the welfare of rural communities, especially the poor, the landless, women, and other marginalized groups.

People know Annachi as the architect of ASSEFA's remarkable growth and as a leader who transformed Gandhian ideals into practical development action. His leadership, commitment to rural development, and unwavering focus on social transformation inspired individuals and institutions across India and beyond.

Dr. K.Panchaksharam (Panchu) *is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of South India Producer Associations (SIPA), Chennai, a pioneering organization dedicated to promoting fair trade and strengthening producer collectives. For over three decades, he has championed the livelihoods of artisans, farmers, and rural producers, creating sustainable market opportunities and empowering grassroots communities across South India.*

Through his guidance, countless community development initiatives gained strength, direction, and purpose, creating lasting impact on the lives of rural families and farmers.

What distinguished Annachi was his ability to combine vision with action. He possessed a rare blend of ideas and practical wisdom that enabled him to breathe life into rural economies through bold initiatives and tireless work. Inspired by the teachings of Vinoba Bhave and Dr. J. C. Kumarappa, he demonstrated that Gandhian economics was not merely a philosophy to be discussed but a model that could be successfully implemented in practice.

He lived a simple life and worked extraordinarily smart. He built deep relationships with rural communities, especially among the landless, Narikurava communities, Puthirai Vannars, and others who were often neglected by mainstream development efforts. His thoughts, emotions, and actions were always centred on one question: How can the lives of poor people be improved?

One of my closest experiences of working with Annachi came during the early 1990s when ASSEFA was invited to implement a Women Development Project supported through the Tamil Nadu Women Development Corporation in South Arcot District. Annachi asked me to support and guide the project.

During our travels and discussions, he would explain in simple terms the concept of Self-Help Groups and how they could become instruments of empowerment for rural women. He emphasized repeatedly that every activity should begin with understanding women's needs. Women should participate in decision-making, training processes, enterprise development, and leadership roles. Development, he believed, should never be something done for people; it should always be done with people.

He assured us that he would mobilize resources and provide guidance whenever needed. What mattered most to him was that the work was carried out systematically and with commitment. The project grew rapidly and became one of the most successful initiatives of its kind. Its success later influenced similar programmes in all ASSEFA's rural development initiatives.

What impressed me was not merely the success of the project itself, but the way Annachi used every experience as an opportunity to learn and innovate. The lessons from these women's programmes eventually led to larger initiatives involving

federations of Self-Help Groups, micro-enterprises, dairy development, women's savings programmes, and community finance institutions. Annachi was constantly thinking ahead. One idea would lead naturally to another. Yet through all these innovations, his focus never changed: the empowerment of poor rural families, particularly women.

His confidence in people was remarkable. Right from the beginning, he entrusted responsibilities to younger colleagues and encouraged them to take leadership. He asked me to represent ASSEFA at state-level review meetings and policy discussions with senior government officials. Such opportunities reflected the immense trust he placed in his team members. He believed that institutions become stronger when people are given responsibility and allowed to grow.

In the later years, with experiences & experiments in Kallakurichi Project, it is observed that ASSEFA and Annachi to replicate or extend SHG models in promoting clusters and grouping them into Federation, Micro enterprises and providing Milch animals to many women, in need (its impact & potentials while women and milch animals are seen as part of the family) enabled Annachi to think of and promoting Seva Milk FPOs and several other activities revolving around women & their savings. Revolving funds could become as Nano Finance – for supporting various livelihood initiatives of ASSEFA.During these 3 years, we were able to create visible impact from Kallakurichi Project. In the process, we could witness generation of new ideas for experimentation.

My association with Annachi continued & all along / as I knew Annachi, saw him as a simple man, always with least of personal ambition but with full of vision for People and Projects of ASSEFA.

Over the years, I came to realize that one of Annachi's greatest gifts was his ability to identify people and connect them to meaningful work. He had an extraordinary instinct for recognizing talent and understanding where a person could contribute best. He consulted widely, listened carefully, and brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds whenever difficult challenges needed solutions.

Many successful initiatives within ASSEFA emerged because Annachi had the foresight to involve the right people at the right time. Yet he never sought personal credit. His concern was always the health of the organisation and the well-being of its stakeholders, never his own recognition.

Despite leading one of India's most influential rural development movements, Annachi lived with extraordinary simplicity. I travelled with him on buses, in unreserved train compartments, and along village roads. We shared simple meals in villages and towns. His familiar appearance—a dhoti, a shoulder bag, a small notebook, a handkerchief, and little else—remained unchanged over the decades.

Whether travelling between Chennai and Madurai or visiting Europe, he carried very few personal belongings. His bag was usually filled with project reports, proposals, notes, and information materials. When he returned from overseas visits, he often came back with little more than he had taken with him, perhaps a few papers or a pen gifted by a friend. Material possessions simply did not matter to him.

He was also deeply disciplined in his personal habits. He never wasted food. He took only what he needed and ensured that nothing remained on his plate. Even these small acts reflected the values he lived by and the respect he showed for resources.

Travelling with Annachi was itself a learning experience. He had a wonderful way of telling stories, sharing incidents from life, and drawing lessons from ordinary situations. Conversations with him often generated new ideas and fresh perspectives. He possessed a gentle humour that made people comfortable and relaxed. His stories could provoke thought, inspire action, or simply bring laughter after a long day of work.

Another quality I admired deeply was his style of leadership. Unlike many leaders, Annachi rarely occupied centre stage. In meetings and public events, he often chose to sit at the back rather than on the dais. He preferred observing people, listening to conversations, and understanding the mood of the gathering.

Similarly, during village visits, he would often get down some distance away and walk through the community before arriving at the meeting venue. Along the way, he interacted with ordinary people, listened to their concerns, and gathered insights. By the time he addressed the gathering, he already understood the realities on the ground. His words therefore carried authenticity and relevance.

What made Annachi truly exceptional was that he combined vision with humility. He had little personal ambition but immense aspirations for people and communities. He demonstrated that leadership is not about authority, visibility, or power. It is about nurturing others, building trust, creating opportunities, and helping people discover their own strengths.

For me personally, Annachi remained an elder brother throughout these sixty years. Whenever challenges arose, his guidance was available. Whenever important decisions had to be made, his wisdom helped illuminate the path ahead. His influence extended beyond professional life and became part of one's values and way of thinking.

Today, as we remember him, we celebrate not only the institutions he built but also the values he embodied. Thousands of women, farmers, children, community leaders, and development professionals have been influenced by his vision and generosity. His contributions will continue to live through the organisations he nurtured, the leaders he mentored, and the communities he empowered.

Though Annachi is no longer physically with us, his presence remains deeply alive in our thoughts and actions. The bond I shared with him will remain forever. As long as I continue my work, I will carry forward the common legacy we believed in—people-centred development rooted in dignity, equality, participation, and compassion.

Annachi will continue to live in the hearts of all those whose lives he touched.

K.Panchaksharam (Panchu)

Founder & Mentor, SIPA Fair Trade

Friend, colleague, admirer, and fellow traveller with Annachi for nearly 60 years.





Annachi : Living the Spirit of the Bhagavad Gita

K.Ramanathan



Dhyana Moolam Gurur Moorthim
Pooja Moolam Gurur Padam
Mantra Moolam Gurur Vaakyam
Mukthi Moolam Gurur Krupa

Acharya Vinoba Bhave once said: "The Bhoodan Movement has not yet achieved its purpose. Go and find pathways for livelihood for Bhoodan beneficiaries; if possible, continue until your last breath."

Sri S. Loganathan — lovingly called Annachi — lived his entire life guided by this message. Deeply rooted in the ideals of Vinoba Ji, he dedicated himself to the cause of social justice and rural upliftment. Without confrontation or political ambition, he quietly built ASSEFA (Association for Sarva Seva Farms)

K. Ramanathan *is a seasoned professional whose career spans the journalism, banking, capital markets, auditing, and development consultancy. For over three decades, he has contributed to rural development, women's empowerment, and institutional strengthening, serving organizations such as Indian Overseas Bank and Richard Wolf India. A long-standing well-wisher of ASSEFA, he has been a trusted friend and steadfast supporter of Annachi's vision and mission.*

into a remarkable institution that became an enabler of livelihood and dignity for the rural poor.

Like his Guru Vinoba Ji, Annachi lived with extraordinary simplicity. He never sought recognition for himself. His constant concern was to follow the path shown by his teacher:

"Save your Mother, save your Motherland, and protect the Cow — and all living beings that sustain rural life."

Through ASSEFA, his vision translated into meaningful and lasting initiatives in women's empowerment, dairy development, agriculture, education, primary healthcare, watershed development, safe drinking water, and microfinance through Self-Help Groups. He strongly believed in the strength and leadership of women — in Sthree Sakthi, the stewardship of family resources by women, and their role as trustees of social progress. Community marriages and women-led institutions reflected this belief in practice.

Annachi often spoke with deep emotion about the responsibility of society towards Bhoodan lands. He would say:

"Bhoodan lands are like a mother's lap — a place where the poor and landless can find care, dignity, and livelihood. These lands are not for sale, nor merely objects of valuation. Once beneficiaries become self-reliant, the land should return for the benefit of other needy families or for public good. Protecting Bhoodan land is the responsibility of both citizens and the State."

His life reflected the spirit of the Bhagavad Gita:
"Na hanyate hanyamane sharire" — the truth does not perish when the body perishes.

A Tamil saying aptly describes his way of life:

"Pasi nokkar, kan thoonjar, mai varutham parar, karumame kannaayinar."
He cared little for food or comfort, slept very little, never complained of hardship, and remained wholly focused on his work and mission.

Sri S. Loganathan Ji — our beloved Annachi — lived a complete and meaningful life in service of the poor, inspired by the ideals of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Until his very last days, he continued to think, plan, and work for the welfare of rural communities. His life remains an enduring example of selfless service, humility, and commitment to human dignity.

May his journey continue through the countless lives, institutions, and communities he nurtured.

Om Shanti.









Grassroots Wisdom, Institutional Foresight

VII
6



Anil Kumar

There are some individuals whose contribution to institution-building cannot be measured merely through designations, visibility, or public recognition. Their impact is felt more deeply in the trust they build, the people they influence, and the values they quietly embed within institutions and communities.

Sri S.Loganathan Ji, fondly known to many as Annachi, was one such individual.

As I reflect on Samunnati's early years and my interactions with Annachi, I remember a person of remarkable simplicity, humility, and clarity of purpose. He possessed a rare ability to look beyond immediate programmes and see the larger possibilities of rural transformation in India.

Anil Kumar SG *is a pioneering social entrepreneur and founder of Samunnati, India's leading agri-value chain enabler. Through innovative financial and market-linkage solutions, he has worked to strengthen farmer collectives and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers across the country. His vision and leadership have contributed significantly to building inclusive and sustainable agricultural ecosystems in India.*



At a time when ecosystem-led agricultural development, collective participation, and farmer-centric institutional models were still emerging ideas, Annachi instinctively understood their importance. He believed deeply that smallholder farmers deserved not only financial access, but also dignity, participation, and long-term inclusion within stronger agricultural ecosystems. More importantly, he believed such transformation could happen only through collaboration.

His association with Samunnati came during a formative stage of our journey, when we were building the foundations of an institution committed to creating inclusive growth opportunities for smallholder farmers through market linkages, aggregation, finance, and ecosystem partnerships. Annachi resonated deeply with this vision and became an important contributor in helping translate these ideas into meaningful grassroots engagement.

What stood out about him was not merely what he did, but how he did it. He worked quietly, without seeking recognition. He carried wisdom lightly. He listened carefully, engaged thoughtfully, and remained deeply rooted in the realities of farming communities.

For many of us, he represented a rare blend of grassroots understanding and forward-looking institutional vision.

Establishing the Centre of Excellence

One of the most significant milestones in Samunnati's early journey was the establishment of the Sarva Seva Samunnati Farms at Pooriyampakkam, Tamil Nadu, in 2016, developed in collaboration with ASSEFA.

The vision behind the Centre of Excellence was not merely to create a demonstration farm. We wanted to build an integrated ecosystem where farmers, institutions, and stakeholders could experience agriculture as a connected and sustainable system — bringing together dairy, soil health, water management, vegetable cultivation, training facilities, and allied livelihoods within one collaborative platform.

Annachi played a pivotal role in grounding this vision in reality.

He brought with him deep trust and credibility among farming communities and local institutions. Farmers related to him because he understood their challenges intimately. Institutions valued him because he approached every engagement with sincerity, practicality, and commitment.

Under his guidance and involvement, the Centre evolved into far more than an infrastructure project. It became a living ecosystem of learning, participation, and collaboration. The Centre supported progressive farmers, promoted integrated agricultural practices, and served as a platform for immersive rural engagement for ecosystem stakeholders, students, development institutions, and farmers alike. He ensured that the initiative remained rooted in farmer realities and community participation rather than becoming a purely institutional exercise.

What I remember most is how naturally he enabled relationships and collaboration. He had the rare ability to bring together people from different backgrounds and make

them feel equally invested in a shared mission.

Bridging Vision and Ground Reality

One of Annachi's greatest strengths was his ability to bridge institutional vision with grassroots realities. Many ideas around ecosystem-building sound compelling in principle. But translating them into sustainable, on-the-ground engagement requires trust, patience, and deep community understanding. Annachi possessed all three.

He recognised early that smallholder farmers needed stronger institutional structures and collective participation to improve their access to markets and opportunities. Long before Farmer Producer Organisations became central to agricultural discourse, he understood the importance of aggregation and collaborative engagement.

Our conversations often extended beyond projects and operations. We spoke about how rural ecosystems could evolve, how farmer institutions could become stronger, and how partnerships between organisations could create larger impact for communities.

He constantly thought ahead of his time.

Annachi believed that agricultural transformation could not happen in silos. It required ecosystems where finance, institutions, markets, knowledge, and communities worked together. Many of the collaborative approaches we speak about today were ideas he naturally advocated years ago through practice and engagement.

What made him especially effective was that he never imposed ideas. He enabled them through relationships, trust, and participation.

Through his engagement with farmers, local leaders, and grassroots institutions, he helped Samunnati build stronger credibility and deeper relationships within rural Tamil Nadu. These early ecosystem-building efforts became important foundations for Samunnati's later growth and engagement with farmer collectives and FPO networks.

Enabling Farmer Collectives and Market Linkages

One of the more meaningful outcomes of our ecosystem engagement during those years was the strengthening of linkages with Farmer Producer Organisation consortiums and farmer networks across Tamil Nadu.

Annachi understood that isolated farmers often lacked bargaining power, market access, and institutional visibility. He believed that collectivisation could significantly improve the economic participation of smallholder farmers.

Through collaborations enabled during this period, pathways emerged that connected grassroots farmer groups with organised market systems and larger ecosystem opportunities. Samunnati's role was to strengthen the institutional and financial architecture required for such engagement, while Annachi ensured that these efforts remained rooted in the realities and needs of farming communities.

What distinguished his approach was that he never saw farmers merely as beneficiaries. He viewed them as participants and stakeholders in the transformation process.

His ability to build confidence among communities helped create stronger participation and trust within these emerging ecosystem models.

The impact went beyond market access alone. It strengthened collective confidence, improved institutional engagement, and demonstrated how collaboration across organisations and farmer groups could create more sustainable agricultural ecosystems.

Approach and Values

If there is one quality that defined Annachi above all else, it was humility.

Despite the respect he commanded across communities and institutions, he remained remarkably simple in his conduct and interactions. He never sought visibility or personal credit for the work he enabled.

He believed deeply in collective progress.

In today's environment, where leadership is often associated with visibility and scale, Annachi represented a quieter and far more enduring form of leadership — one rooted in trust, consistency, and service.
He approached people with warmth and dignity, regardless of their position or background. Whether interacting with farmers, institutional stakeholders, or colleagues, he carried the same sincerity and openness.

I personally learned a great deal from observing the way he engaged with communities. He reminded us that institution-building is ultimately about people, relationships, and trust.

He also possessed an extraordinary ability to remain optimistic about possibilities, even while understanding the realities and constraints of rural ecosystems. His approach was always constructive, collaborative, and future-oriented.

Many of the immersive learning experiences, ecosystem engagements, and collaborative interactions that emerged through the Centre of Excellence reflected his belief that meaningful transformation requires participation, not prescription.

His leadership style was quiet, but his influence was profound.

Legacy

As I reflect today on Annachi's life and contribution, I believe his legacy extends far beyond any individual initiative or institution.

He represented a generation of grassroots leaders whose work often remains understated, but whose contributions quietly shape ecosystems, strengthen communities, and enable long-term institutional impact.

He reminded us that transformation is not built through scale alone, but through empathy. That institutions grow stronger when rooted in humility. And that meaningful leadership does not always seek attention.

For all of us at Samunnati, he will always remain an important part of our early journey — someone who believed in our vision, strengthened our resolve, and

constantly encouraged collaboration for the benefit of farming communities.

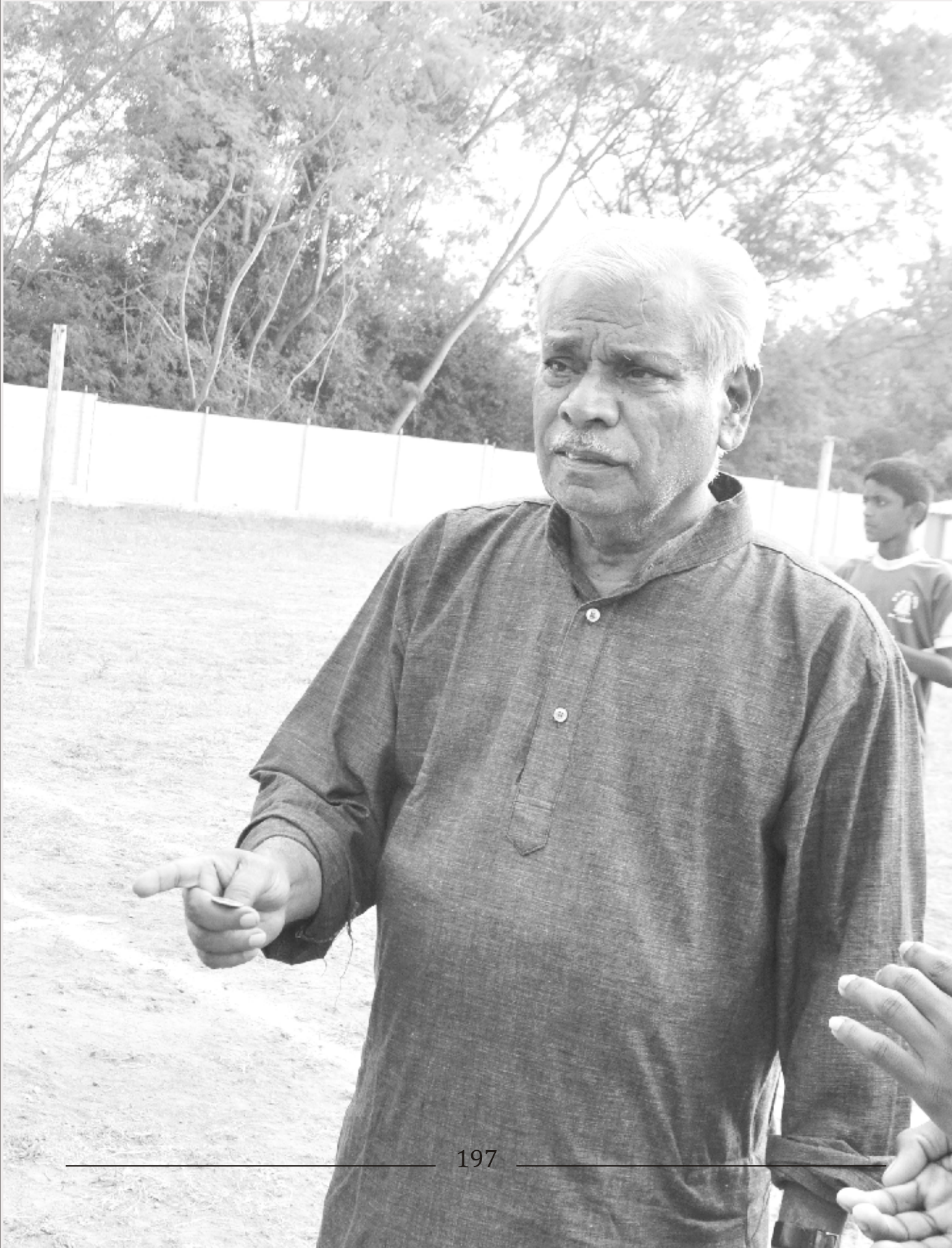
Personally, I will remember him as someone who combined simplicity with wisdom, humility with conviction, and grassroots understanding with extraordinary clarity of thought.

As we honour Sri S. Loganathan Ji, we celebrate not only his contributions, but also the timeless values he stood for — service, collaboration, institution-building, and dignity for rural communities.

His life and work will continue to inspire many of us for years to come.

May his soul rest in peace.







A Guru who taught us Development Basics

N.V.Ramana



It has been a few weeks since we lost Loganathanji — Annachi to all of us — but his presence continues to guide and inspire. His life was a living example of Gandhian simplicity, humility, and service. A dhoti-clad man of few words, Annachi dedicated himself to protecting the Bhoodan lands gifted through Shri Vinoba Bhave's movement, ensuring they were used for the welfare of communities across the nation.

I first met him in 2002, when I joined BASIX as a board member. That meeting marked the beginning of a relationship that would shape my journey in profound ways. By 2004, Annachi had already become a mentor and guide. He asked me to analyse the dairy operations of ASSEFA, and in his characteristic style, he did not simply assign the task — he personally accompanied me to each dairy, patiently explaining the challenges.

N.V.Ramana *is a development professional and alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad who has made significant contributions to the livelihoods and microfinance sector. As a senior member of the BASIX group, he played an important role in promoting financial inclusion, rural entrepreneurship, and sustainable livelihood development. His work has helped strengthen institutions that empower marginalized communities across India.*

What struck me most was his ability to move seamlessly between village farmers, corporate customers, and international donors. He was equally comfortable in all these worlds, carrying the same humility and clarity wherever he went.

Annachi's mentorship was never about giving instructions; it was about leading by example. He acknowledged the work of others, solved complex problems with simplicity, and encouraged people to take ownership of projects. Each time I met him, I found him surrounded by new groups of people, working on fresh social initiatives across diverse sectors.

His orchestration was remarkable — he would encourage, support, and connect people, and soon funding and resources would flow naturally. From him, I learned that simplicity and sincerity can achieve wonders in this world.

His impact was not limited to agriculture or dairying. Annachi helped establish around a hundred schools, providing quality education to rural children. These schools were not merely centres of learning; they became lifelines for communities. Many were supported through sustainable funding sources, including income generated from Bhoodan lands, rentals, and marriage halls.

During times of natural disasters — storms and floods — these schools became community shelters, proving that infrastructure created for education could also serve as a refuge in times of crisis. Annachi's vision was always holistic: learning spaces were also community spaces, and education was inseparable from resilience.

Equally transformative was his work in community finance. Through ASSEFA, Annachi helped establish financial systems that supported livelihoods and empowered rural families. He believed that financial organisation was essential for meaningful social development, and he demonstrated how communities could collectively manage resources to achieve stability and growth. His approach was practical yet visionary — rooted in Gandhian ideals, yet adapted to modern challenges.

Despite his popularity in Europe, Annachi remained deeply committed to grassroots work in India. He led impact-driven initiatives in education, health, and community building, including community marriages that strengthened social bonds. His ability to balance international recognition with local dedication was extraordinary.

He never sought personal glory; instead, he focused on enabling others, building institutions, and creating systems that would endure.

For me, Annachi was more than a mentor — he was a guru. His guidance shaped my understanding of social development, and his example continues to influence my work. He taught me that acknowledging others, solving problems simply, and staying rooted in values are the keys to meaningful impact.

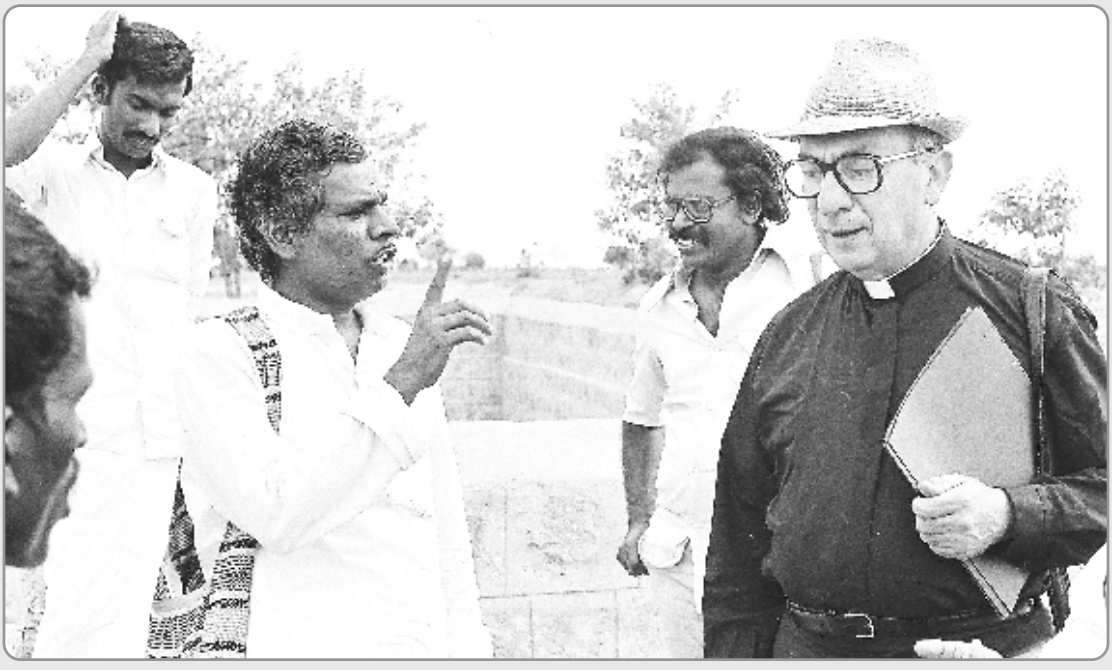
Every memory with him carries a lesson, and every lesson carries forward his legacy.

We miss Annachi deeply. His memories and guidance will always remain with us, lighting the path for future generations. Annachi's life reminds us that true leadership is not about words or appearances, but about quiet action, humility, and unwavering commitment to the community.

Rest in peace, Annachi. Your simplicity, wisdom, and vision will forever remain our compass.









A Life of Gandhian Values



Dr. Jill Carr-Harris

Loganathan was a leader in the voluntary sector in India for sixty years. He came from Tamil Nadu, but his presence was felt throughout the country. On this 45th day marking his passing, he deserves to be memorialized for the generations to come. He has carried out some extraordinary work during his lifetime, and in tribute to what he achieved, Rajagopal and I wanted to write a few highlights which we found striking.

Loganathan adopted voluntary poverty at a young age, when he imbibed Gandhian values. Having grown up in Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement in Tamil Nadu in the 1960s, and working closely with S. Jagannathan, he was shaped by the principle: 'what you do, shows your values, not what you say'.

Dr. Jill Carr-Harris *is a Canadian development professional who has worked in India for over 30 years. As a key organizer of the Ahimsa Santhai in Madurai in 2022, she has actively promoted the vision of a non-violent economy and supported initiatives that advance social justice, sustainability, and community empowerment.*

There are numerous stories about how Loganathan visited his friend Ermeglio in Italy, wearing the same dhoti and Jola bag, that he wore in the villages. The dress reflected a humility and consistency of values which he demonstrated over sixty years. He did not take additional resources for himself; he always lived according to his needs in very simple settings. He was critical of many of his associates whom he considered as self-promoters; he believed in dedicated service and less talk. In the times that we interacted with him at the CESCI campus, he spoke about supporting rural women through livelihood generation. He believed in collective enterprises where assets were shared locally.

'Doing Sarvodaya work' was the defining feature of his life.

Loganathan was also deeply influenced by the American priest R.R. Keithan, and J.C. Kumarappa: ASSEFA became one of the great innovators in local economy. What he established was a milk cooperative called SEVA Milk. Through ASSEFA Dairy Development Federation (ADDF) incorporated in 1995, he built a milk industry that gave rural women assets that led to their greater autonomy. Within ten years of setting, it up, 19,000 women were working in 600 dairy groups with surplus milk being used by families in the village. Six cooperative dairy plants were built each producing 70,000 litres a day. This has continued and expanded to be a profitable company until today.

While we hear a great deal about Verghese Kurien and Amul Dairy, few people know about Loganathan's contribution to building such a large milk infrastructure, which has a considerable impact on Tamil society.

While setting up the dairy units, Loganathan began one of the first and largest micro-credit institutions in India which he referred to as Non-Banking Financial Institutions (NBFI). At its height Loganathan was running the largest NGOs in Asia. By accessing investment from foreign markets and providing credit to the women's self-help groups of ASSEFA, a whole community architecture was created at the local level involving MBTs (Mutual Benefit Trusts) and the mother organization known as SNL (Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd) that was registered by the

Reserve Bank of India. At its height, ASSEFA had direct contact with 6000 villages with about 500,000 women across seven states of India. What was extraordinary about this company is that it sheltered SHGs from financial risk yet at the same time it gave women stakeholders maximum involvement in decision-making.

With the help of BASIX, Loganathan created a hybrid financial entity in which investors were not the decision-makers, but which provided women access to credit. This was one of the biggest micro-credit programs in Asia.

Loganathan also created one of the largest modern-day examples of Gandhi's Nai Talim or New Education. There were five hundred and twenty schools, in half the districts of the Tamilnadu. This education meant to mould children into having honest and a moral character by inculcating the values of truth and nonviolence. The way children learned nonviolence was in their studies, in working in the community gardens, having a vibrant student body assisting with school administration and using the arts for learning.

Loganathan made a unique contribution in alternative education that continues to nourish the next generation.

There are many other contributions that Loganathan made in his lifetime. But suffice it to say, Loganathan committed his whole life to the upliftment of rural people especially women, the majority of whom are in Tamil Nadu. In providing livelihood, micro-credit and education to a large population, Loganathan has made a deep impact. Moreover, the very values which motivated him were baked into the work.

If we look at Tamil Nadu today, the advancement of women is unparalleled in comparison to the rest of India. No doubt this was influenced by the livelihood generation, access to micro-credit and provision of alternative education programs.

We feel proud to have known someone like Loganathan in our lifetime, --a man of great stature– and we hope that his memory will continue to nurture the next generation to be courageous and take up such innovative work at the grassroots level.







A Life of Simplicity, Service, and Commitment to the poor

VII
9



Muthuvelayutham

With deep sorrow and reverence, I offer this tribute to Annachi Loganathan ji, Founder of ASSEFA, whose life itself became a message of simplicity, service, and unwavering commitment to the poorest and most neglected rural communities. His departure from mortal presence has left a profound silence among all of us who were guided, inspired, and transformed by his vision. Yet, even within this silence, his spirit continues to live on — in the villages, in women's collectives, in farmers' groups, in schools and health programmes, and in the many institutions that grew from his lifelong dedication to Gandhian constructive work.

Annachi Loganathan ji was not merely the founder of an organisation. He was a builder of people's confidence, a nurturer of Gram Swaraj, and a quiet revolutionary who believed that true development must begin in the village and

Muthuvelayutham *of CCD is a development practitioner committed to community empowerment and social transformation. A friend and supporter of ASSEFA, he has worked to advance participatory development approaches that promote dignity, self-reliance, and sustainable livelihoods for marginalized communities.*

remain in the hands of the people themselves. ASSEFA, which began its work with landless families and Bhoodan lands, evolved into a vast movement rooted in Sarvodaya, Gram Swaraj, self-reliance, equality, and social justice. Its mission was to strengthen the economic, social, and cultural life of rural communities while nurturing their capacity for self-management without discrimination.

My own association with Annachi's work began during my Master's in Social Work. As students, we visited an ASSEFA Gram Sabha, and that experience remains one of the most formative moments of my life. There, we witnessed women's Self-Help Groups, farmers' group leaders, youth groups, and even children's clubs actively participating in village development. It was not development as a project; it was development as collective community life. The Gram Sabha was not symbolic — it was the centre of decision-making, dignity, and shared responsibility. The ASSEFA model showed us that village assemblies could hold power, plan their future, and organise collective action for their own upliftment.

What impressed us most was the practical expression of true Gram Swaraj. Collective farming, women's SHGs, farmers' organisations, child sponsorship programmes, community schools, health initiatives, and livelihood programmes were all woven into one living process. ASSEFA did not view poverty merely as an economic condition. It understood poverty in its many dimensions — land, livelihood, health, education, water, housing, gender justice, and community harmony. This holistic approach left a deep and lasting impression on me and many of my batchmates.

Under the guidance of our professors, and inspired by the pathways demonstrated through ASSEFA's Kariyapatti block development programmes, we attempted to follow similar footprints in the neighbouring blocks of Narikudi and Tiruchuzhi. We did not seek merely to replicate activities; we tried to absorb the spirit behind them — trust in people, collective ownership, patient institution-building, and faith in rural communities. The ASSEFA experience taught us that sustainable change does not come from external intervention alone. It grows when communities become the owners of their own development.

One of the strongest inspirations for us came from the Natham Seva Milk programme. We saw how rural production could be organised with dignity and how women could take leadership in managing economic institutions. ASSEFA's work with milk processing and women-owned structures demonstrated that livelihoods could be both

economically viable and socially transformative. Women's SHGs stood at the centre of village organisation, while milk processing units, microfinance institutions, and other community organisations were built around participation and ownership.

Inspired by this experience, we later initiated a similar approach through mango pulp processing in our own region. It was a modest attempt to convert local produce into value-added products and ensure that rural producers received fairer returns rather than remaining dependent on middlemen. In that effort too, Annachi's unseen guidance remained present. He had shown us that rural enterprises should never be separated from social purpose. Economic activity, when rooted in community ownership, can itself become an instrument of justice.

We also learned from ASSEFA's community health and school programmes and attempted to adapt similar approaches in our project villages. ASSEFA's schools, health centres, safe drinking water initiatives, maternal care programmes, and village sanitation efforts demonstrated that human development must always be comprehensive. Education was not merely literacy; it was the shaping of responsible citizens. Health was not merely treatment; it was community well-being. The organisation's approach to children, women, and village institutions reflected Annachi's deep understanding of life in its fullness.

During Annachi's last six months at Shanthi Gram, we had the privilege of bringing many young entrepreneurs to meet him and be inspired by his vision. Even during that phase, his presence carried a quiet strength. He never spoke the language of personal achievement. He spoke instead about responsibility, service, and the need for a new generation of social entrepreneurs. For him, enterprise was never merely business; it was a pathway of service. He wanted young people to build institutions that combined compassion, competence, sustainability, and community ownership.

Annachi's greatest contribution was demonstrating how Gandhian ideals could be translated into tangible village life, making poor communities true partners and leaders in development.

For me personally, Annachi Loganathan ji was a guiding light. His work deeply shaped my understanding of development and influenced the founding vision of The Covenant Centre for Development. He taught us that the path of service requires humility, patience, courage, and deep listening. He showed us that transformation

becomes possible only when we walk with people rather than ahead of them.

As we honour his life and legacy, we are called upon to carry his ideals forward — building communities rooted in self-reliance, peace, dignity, and justice, inspired by his example.

May his life continue to inspire us to build communities of truth, love, justice, and peace. His legacy is not behind us; it stands before us as a continuing responsibility.





Annachi: A Rare Blend of Competence, Professionalism, and Humility

VII

10



Prof. Somnath Ghosh

It was sometime in early 2001 that I first met Annachi, when I was accompanying Vijay Mahajan for capacity-building work for Sarvodaya Nano Finance Limited (SNFL). Perhaps because he held Vijay in special regard, I too received a great deal of affection. Over the years I met him many times, and brief though most meetings were, we invariably spoke about what it takes to build and sustain institutions.

People who worked — and walked — with him during his long journey in the development sector know him far better than I do. Even for them, to capture the many dimensions of his life and the sweep and depth of his work would require a book. There is, however, a deeply moving video on him by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in its Conversations with Living Gandhians series. As for me, I will confine myself to a set of interviews I conducted with him in 2017 while co-authoring a book on PRADAN.

Prof. Somnath Ghosh *is a distinguished academic and management educator who has taught at several premier institutions, including Indian Institutes of Management. A former officer of the Reserve Bank of India, he is currently a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies and serves on the boards of several banks, companies, and non-governmental organizations.*

As many readers would know, PRADAN was registered as a Society on Bhoodan Day in 1983, with Annachi as its Vice-Chairman. But the foundational work for the creation of PRADAN emerged from the cradle of ASSEFA's work in Bihar. While researching the book, I had access to a wealth of archival material — minutes of meetings, office notes, correspondence, and reports — every researcher's delight. Yet interviews with the founders offered insights of an entirely different order. And among them, Annachi was special.

When Vijay first shared with Annachi the idea of an organisation of professionals supporting rural development agencies, Annachi responded thoughtfully. He appreciated the idea, but insisted that such a model had first to prove itself on the ground before it could gain wider acceptance among voluntary agencies, professionals, and donor organisations. He told Vijay he would gladly support the initiative if the experiment was first tried within ASSEFA itself, and if Vijay was willing to lead it. Soon afterwards, in August 1982, Vijay joined ASSEFA.

During my interviews, I asked Annachi why he had made this a condition. He explained that while the Tamil Nadu projects were functioning well, the projects in Gaya were struggling. The commitment of the Sarvodaya workers there was unquestionable, but outcomes remained poor and implementation suffered from serious slippages.

There was another reason for his concern. In 1981, ASSEFA had convened a consortium meeting of donor agencies in Brussels. The donors decided that before committing institutional support to ASSEFA, they wanted an independent evaluation. Alan Leather, a former Oxfam field director who knew Bihar well, was chosen for the task.

When Alan Leather visited in March 1982, he focused heavily on the Gaya projects and produced a report that was highly critical of ASSEFA's work there. Many donors, familiar mainly with the Tamil Nadu projects, were surprised by the findings. Annachi later travelled to Europe to explain the situation and assure them that improvements would follow. A second review visit by Alan Leather was scheduled for the following year, and this weighed heavily on Annachi's mind.

What followed became an important turning point. Beginning with Rajan village and extending to four other villages, the transformation in the Gaya project between

September and December 1982 was extraordinary. When Alan Leather returned in March 1983, he was deeply impressed by the mobilisation of the community and the visible turnaround in the work. His second report was favourable and specifically commended ASSEFA's decision to bring in young professionals from outside the Sarvodaya fold to work alongside grassroots community workers.

Annachi reflected deeply on what this experience had taught him. The turnaround, he said, demonstrated the need to professionalise development organisations — but with important caveats. The sector did not need mediocre professionals; it needed the very best. Operational competence was essential, but it had to be tempered with humility toward colleagues and communities alike.

"Humility," he told me, "is practical. Without humility, you will not open your eyes and ears to the wisdom around you. Without humility, you cannot truly embrace the people and carry the community with you."

At one point I asked him, "Annachi, the Sarvodaya leaders in Gaya surely had compassion and humility. But did that alone ensure implementation or prevent failures?"

He smiled gently and replied, "Competence, professionalism, and humility are not opposed to one another. Look at Gandhiji. He possessed all three in abundance. And he also had the moral courage to take hard decisions."

It struck me that Annachi was deliberately speaking in a language that someone from a management institute would understand. So I pressed further: "Then what more is needed for institution-building at the grassroots?"

He answered softly, almost as if the answer was already present in the question itself. "You used the word 'grassroots'. Precisely. Forget institution-building. Can you even work effectively as a paniyalar — a worker — if you are not embedded in the community you serve?"

My notes from those conversations also remind me of something management institutions scarcely comprehend: how women with little literacy and few resources can come together, form institutions, and over time learn to manage both their

finances and their enterprises. He was speaking of SNFL. Then, with characteristic mischief, he added: "When Vijay first brought you to one of the SNFL meetings, I thought your IIM background would help in their capacity-building!"

I laughed and admitted, "Annachi, there your expectations were misplaced. Having just emerged from the IIM ecosystem, I was far too raw and unprepared for such a task."

There was one riddle, however, that Annachi never solved for me. At a public celebration, he once referred to one of his own protégés as a yugpurush — a man of the age. When I later asked him why, he simply smiled and said, "Later." I never followed up.

Time passed. And now Annachi himself has passed into the annals of time.

Yet his ideas, his gentleness, his clarity, and his deep faith in people remain vividly alive in all those whose lives he shaped.





The Greatest Humanitarian

VII

11



L.Ganesh Moorthy

Carrying Gandhian ideals in his heart, walking steadfastly in the path of the noble Vinoba Bhave, he lived a life devoted to eradicating poverty and earned a place of undying honor among the people.

Sarvodaya leader Loganathan Annachi regarded Mahatma Gandhi's dream of village self-rule and Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan philosophy as the two guiding eyes of his life.

Through the noble voluntary organization ASSEFA, he sowed the seeds for grassroots rural development across countless villages.

L Ganesh Moorthy, *a dedicated entrepreneur of Sivakasi, is also a passionate supporter of Tamil literature and an active member of Tamil Ilakkiya Mandram. He holds a deep admiration for Annachi's writings, having read all his publications. To honor Annachi's contributions to Tamil literacy, Ganesan has organized a special function on behalf of the Mandram*

Education as Liberation

Believing deeply that an ignorant society could never truly flourish, Annachi established numerous Seva Schools that brought the light of education into the lives of thousands of poor rural children.

He saw education not merely as literacy, but as dignity, awakening, and social transformation. Through these institutions, generations of village children found confidence, opportunity, and hope.

A Progressive Visionary for Women's Economic Freedom

Annachi firmly believed that the true freedom of a nation lies in the economic independence of its women.

With this conviction, he pioneered innovative rural financial systems and introduced microcredit initiatives through "Nano Finance," providing women's self-help groups with affordable financial support at minimal interest rates. These efforts transformed countless women into self-reliant earners and decision-makers within their families and communities.

He was not merely a social reformer, but a visionary who understood that empowering women meant empowering society itself.

A White Revolution in Rural Life

To improve the livelihoods of farmers, Annachi established cattle development and dairy initiatives that strengthened the rural economy.

Through the unique "Seva Paal" brand, he created systems for milk procurement and cooperative dairy development that brought economic stability to village families. These efforts sparked a quiet white revolution across many rural communities.

A Benefactor Who Wiped Away Tears

To relieve poor families of the crushing burden of marriage expenses, Annachi organized free mass weddings for more than a thousand couples, providing not only the sacred thali but also essential household gifts and support for beginning married life with dignity.

To many ordinary people, he became nothing less than a living guardian angel — a man whose generosity touched the most intimate moments of their lives.

At the same time, he also nurtured the spiritual life of communities by helping establish temples such as the Arulmigu Chikkal Singaravelar Temple in Kallikudi and the Annai Annapoorani Temple in Kariyapatti Thonugal.

Literature Rooted in the Soil

The Sarvodaya Literary Farm bookstore established by him in Madurai and the monthly magazine Salaram, published through the SAARC organization, nourished the intellectual hunger of readers.

Annachi was also a gifted writer who traveled through several European countries and transformed his experiences into vivid literary reflections.

His stories carried the fragrance of the soil.
His characters were simple village people.
Without excessive ornamentation or dramatic flourish, he possessed a rare gift for storytelling through natural conversation and understated realism.

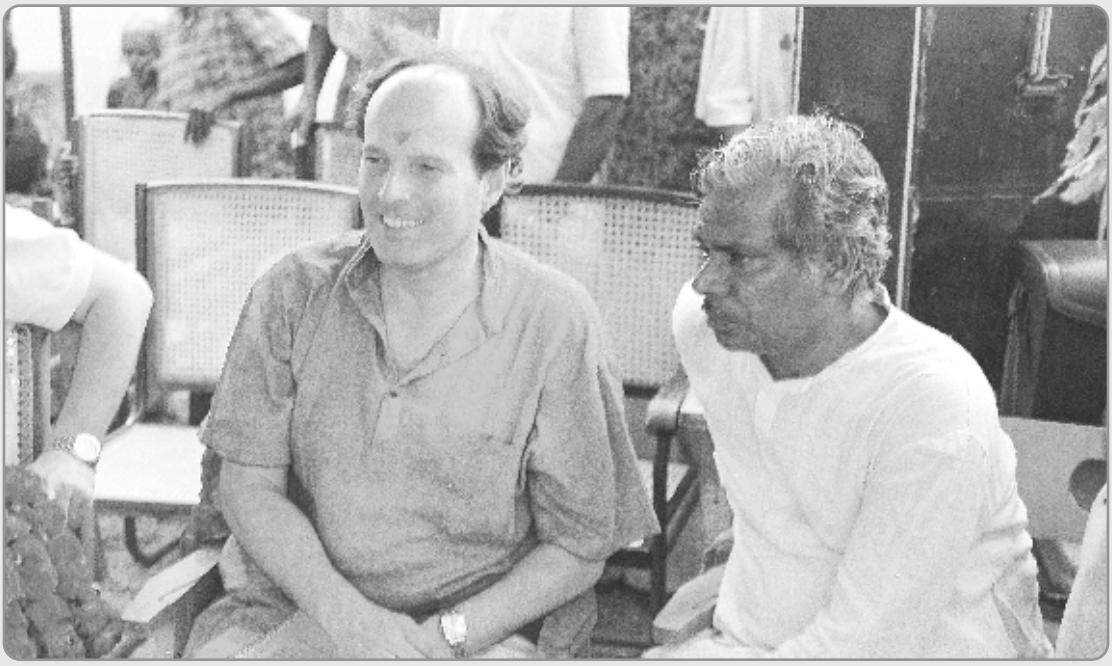
He wrote stories in the language of children, lively narratives that appealed to youth, and spiritual tales cherished by elders. Through characters like the witty "Patti Siddhar," who answered difficult questions with sharp satire and humor, he reached readers across generations.

The Definition of Simplicity

Despite achieving so much, Loganathan Annachi remained profoundly simple.

He was also a talented stage actor capable of bringing characters vividly to life in theatre performances. Though he had opportunities to closely interact with many internationally renowned figures, he lived until the very end as a humble realist, untouched by arrogance or pretension.

There is little doubt that the Sarvodaya flame lit by this great humanitarian will continue to shine forever in the history of Tamil Nadu's villages.

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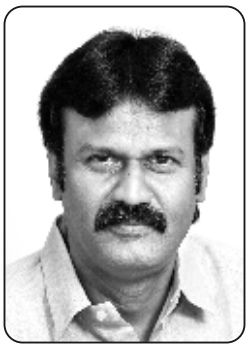
A Citizen of the World



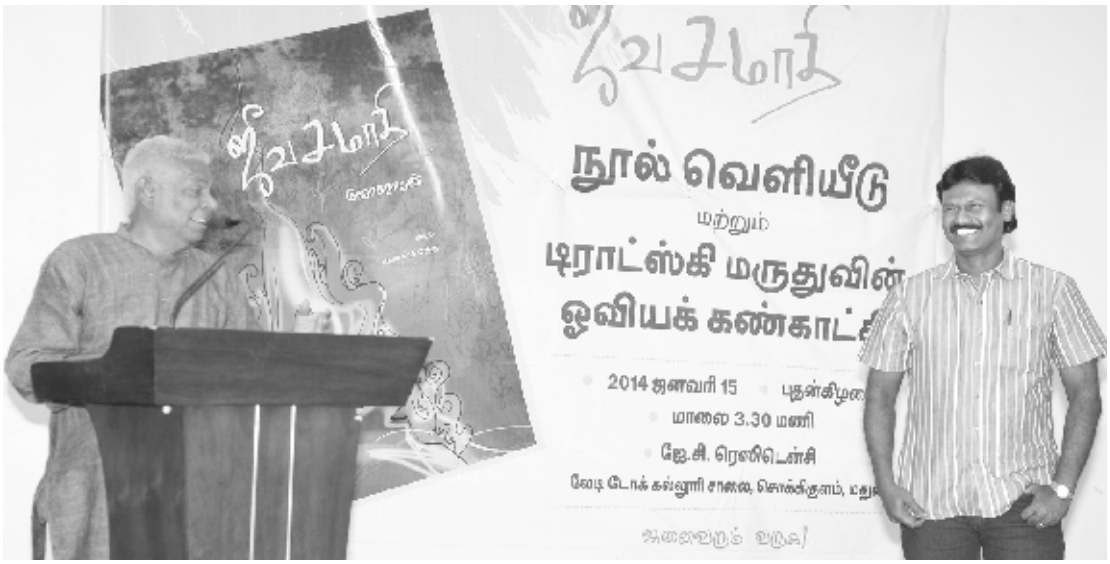
L.Arunagiri

"Service through Sarvodaya is happiness" this was the principle by which my father, K.V. Lakshmanan, lived his life.

As a child, I spent less time growing up among children my own age and more time in the company of Gandhian dreamers draped in khadi. So when I entered the printing industry soon after finishing school, it felt natural that I would eventually become connected with ASSEFA.

For more than thirty years now, I have shared a professional relationship with ASSEFA an organization that strives toward the ideal of "everything for everyone", a new and expanded expression of the old Sarvodaya vision that upliftment must reach even the very last person.

L.Arunagiri *is the proprietor of Vijaya Enterprises and is widely recognized for his expertise in design, printing, and publication work. A passionate lover of Tamil literature and an active member of the Tamil Ilakkiya Mandram in Sivakasi, he has collaborated closely with Annachi Shri Loganathan Ji in publishing numerous books and the monthly Tamil magazine Salaram.*



New Days, New Ideas

Every day is born anew.
And each new day brings fresh ideas to Annachi.

He never spends time speaking about the past. In fact, he rarely revisits even the extraordinary things he has already achieved. His mind is always occupied with one question: What do our people need today?

The Sarvodaya collective farms, financial assistance for land development, cattle-rearing initiatives, dairy development programs, quality education for village children, microcredit for women, housing projects, free marriages for poor women — countless such efforts were born from his imagination. And none of them remained mere ideas. They became living, successful movements that transformed rural communities.

Was He Not the Pulse of Society Itself?

Where did Annachi's ideas come from?
How was he able to understand people's needs with such precision?

The answer lies in his simplicity.

He would travel across towns — and even across countries — carrying very little money in his pocket. He would eat comfortably at the smallest roadside hotel and, before finishing his meal, would already have become friends with the owner through casual conversation.

If his car driver arrived late, he would simply board a government bus without the slightest irritation. By chance, someone seated beside him would begin discussing local happenings, politics, and people's struggles in vivid detail. From such ordinary conversations, he absorbed the pulse of society.

At women's gatherings, his playful humor and warmth would immediately dissolve hesitation. Women would begin pouring out their worries, hardships, and dreams openly before him. What a trained social scientist might discover through elaborate field research, Annachi would learn naturally — simply by speaking to people with genuine affection and curiosity.

A Man Who Knew Where People Belonged

Annachi Loganathanji was a man of action.

He possessed an extraordinary ability to absorb information and understand people instantly. He could assess situations and individuals with remarkable clarity. He was a gifted administrator — disciplined and demanding, yet deeply compassionate and humane.

But among all his qualities, one stood above the rest: his ability to identify the right people and place them in the right roles.

And once he entrusted someone with responsibility, he gave them complete freedom. He would never hover over them unnecessarily. The hundreds of schools, financial institutions, dairy projects, and rural initiatives that later flourished like vast banyan trees were built by people whom he trusted — and who, in turn, trusted him completely.

Peace That Shone Through His Writing

At heart, Annachi was also a poet.
A playwright.
An actor.

A man of many gifts.
Above all, someone with a rare ability to bring people together.

When ASSEFA launched the magazine Salaram during the 2010s, the creative spirit that had long rested quietly within him burst forth with energy. He began writing serialized stories and novels that captivated children and young readers alike. Once picked up, his books were impossible to put down.

Many of his stories featured kings and rulers who eventually renounced worldly power to become sages. Through them, Annachi gently taught children about the impermanence of life. In other stories, conflicts would erupt among animals in a forest, only to be resolved by the arrival of a wise bear who restored peace.

Through such simple tales, he conveyed one profound message to children:
the world's greatest need is peace.

Annachi — A Citizen of the World

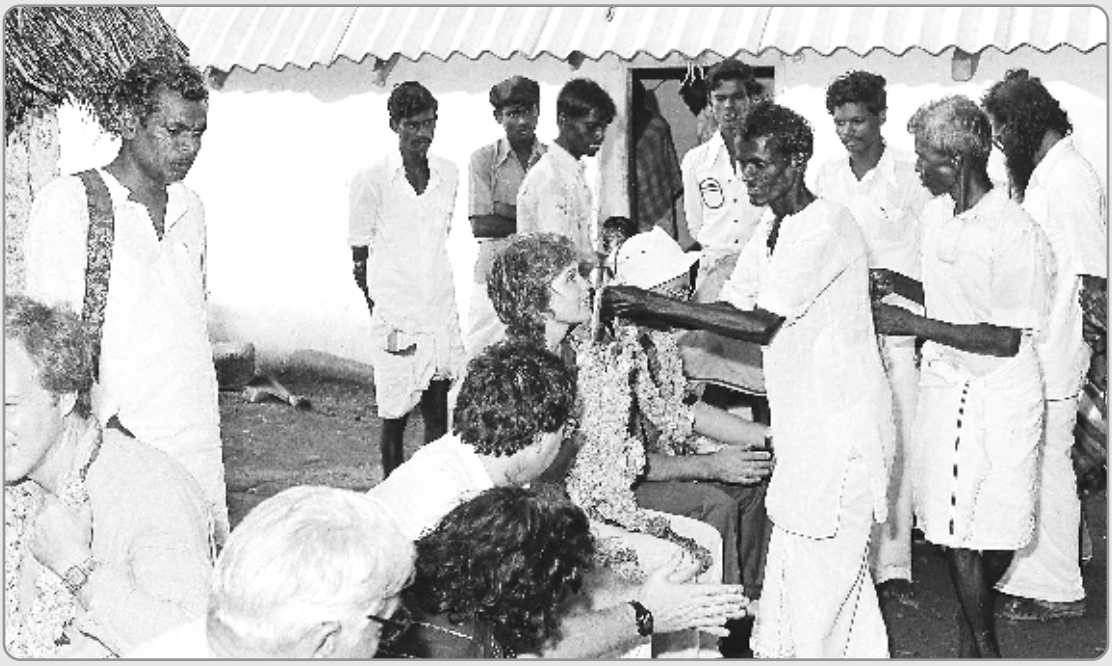
Annachi thought far beyond narrow identities of language or nation.

He did not see himself merely as a Tamilan or an Indian, but as a citizen of the world. He would often say that the discoveries of scientists belonged not to individual nations, but to all humanity.

Whenever we discussed global problems, he would insist that we think beyond geographical borders and approach them with the mind of a true human being belonging to the whole world.

That was Annachi.

A man rooted deeply in the soil of villages — yet whose imagination embraced the entire world.







Voices from the Field

1. A.Lakshmi
2. K.Ponnusamy
3. M.Rajendran
4. A.Amala Mary



Remembering Annachi



A.Lakshmi

Long time ASSEFA Worker and Women's Movement Leader

I had the privilege of working with ASSEFA for more than forty years and, through those years, I came to know Annachi closely.

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of him is his simplicity. He lived without any trace of pretension, yet earned a permanent place in the hearts of countless people. Despite dedicating his life to the welfare of thousands, he never sought recognition for himself.

Annachi was a man who truly lived the Gandhian belief that "the soul of India lives in its villages." Throughout his life, he worked tirelessly to make that vision a reality. He became a guide, a source of strength, and a trusted friend to poor and marginalized communities across many districts of Tamil Nadu.

The advancement of women was at the heart of his work. He firmly believed that women should stand confidently on their own feet and participate fully in shaping their lives and communities. Through women's self-help groups, savings movements, livelihood programmes, credit initiatives, and countless opportunities for economic empowerment, he helped thousands of women gain confidence, dignity, and independence.

Annachi's concern extended especially to those who lived on the margins of society — landless families, tribal communities, persons with disabilities, widows, and the poorest households. He worked tirelessly to improve their lives by creating opportunities for housing, safe drinking water, sanitation, agriculture, livestock development, small businesses, electricity, and sustainable livelihoods.

Education held a special place in his heart. He believed that children in rural villages deserved access to quality education and brighter futures. To make this possible, he established schools and personally travelled from village to village, encouraging families to send their children to school.

Agriculture was his lifeblood. His contributions to farming, dairy development, environmental stewardship, and sustainable rural livelihoods transformed countless communities. He understood that strengthening agriculture was essential to strengthening rural families.

One principle guided his life above all others: no human being should have to live with hunger. Whatever the task, wherever the need arose, Annachi worked without concern for personal comfort, time, or hardship. His energies were always directed toward the well-being of others.

He was also a deeply reflective person. Rising in the early hours of the morning, he spent time in meditation and contemplation. I believe it was from this inner discipline and quiet strength that he drew the energy that sustained his lifelong service.

Today, although Annachi is no longer physically with us, he continues to live through the institutions he built, the communities he strengthened, and the countless lives he transformed. His work endures, and the impact of his service continues to touch people every day.

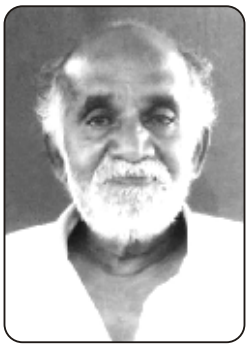
Like the waves of the sea that never cease, the influence of his life and service will continue to echo through generations.

Annachi's memory, and the seeds of compassion, dignity, and service that he planted, will continue to guide us for many years to come.



Faith, Responsibility, and Compassion

VIII
2



K.Ponnusamy

Former Chief Education Officer, Dindigul District

In Dindigul district, in the village of Natham, there is a small hamlet called K. Pudur. It was in this village that I first came to know Sri Loganathan, whom everyone affectionately called "Annachi."

When I joined the education service in 1979 as a teacher, I was assigned to work in Natham. Through that posting, I came into contact with many people who were engaged in social service. Among them, Annachi stood out from the very beginning. Even in those early years, his dedication to serving people and improving the lives of rural communities was clearly visible. His commitment to helping others left a deep impression on me.

At first, I knew him simply as a social worker. Later, as I became more closely acquainted with him, I came to understand the breadth of his vision and the depth of his commitment. In those days, working among villages was not easy. Yet Annachi travelled tirelessly, meeting people, listening to their concerns, and finding practical solutions to their problems. What amazed me most was his ability to approach every challenge with patience, clarity, and confidence.

One of the qualities that distinguished Annachi was his remarkable ability to identify people's strengths and encourage them to use those strengths for the common good. He believed deeply in teamwork and collective responsibility.

Whenever he entrusted a task to someone, he did so with complete faith in their abilities. That trust inspired people to work with greater commitment and confidence.

I have often reflected on how Annachi nurtured relationships. He treated everyone with respect, regardless of status or background. Whether speaking with a village farmer, a government official, or a community volunteer, he showed the same warmth and humility. His conversations were always thoughtful and purposeful, leaving people encouraged and motivated.

Another quality I admired was his ability to recognize talent and create opportunities for others. Many individuals who later became respected leaders and development professionals received encouragement and guidance from him during their formative years. He never sought personal credit; instead, he took joy in seeing others grow and succeed.

As an Education Officer, I also witnessed his deep concern for children and education. He believed that education was the foundation of social transformation. His efforts to establish schools and educational opportunities in rural areas reflected his conviction that every child deserved access to quality learning, regardless of where they were born.

What impressed me most was his unwavering faith in people. He trusted communities to solve their own problems when given the right opportunities and support. This belief became the foundation of much of ASSEFA's work and contributed significantly to its success.

Today, although Annachi is no longer physically among us, his spirit continues to live through the institutions he built, the communities he strengthened, and the countless people whose lives he touched. His life stands as an example of selfless service, humility, trust, and dedication to the welfare of others.

For me, remembering Annachi is not merely recalling a respected social worker. It is remembering a compassionate human being whose life demonstrated what is possible when one dedicates oneself wholeheartedly to the service of society.

May his memory continue to inspire future generations, just as it has inspired all of us who had the privilege of knowing him.



A life dedicated to serve others

VIII

3



M.Rajendran

Former Revenue Divisional Officer, Sattur
Natham Union, Dindigul District

I came to know ASSEFA's work in Natham in 1987, when I was serving as the Revenue Inspector of Natham. From that time onward, I had the opportunity to closely observe the activities of ASSEFA. Through those interactions, I came to know Annachi well and developed a deep respect for him.

My first impression of him was his simplicity. At first glance, he appeared to be an ordinary village elder. But the more one interacted with him, the more one discovered the depth of his thinking and the extraordinary commitment behind his work. Through ASSEFA, he worked tirelessly for the welfare of rural communities, and I witnessed many of those efforts firsthand.

One incident remains particularly vivid in my memory. During a severe drought, a large group of landless poor families had settled in the Sirumalai foothills. Annachi visited the area and personally studied their situation. Concerned about their welfare, he approached the government seeking land rights and livelihood support for them. His efforts eventually resulted in 129 days of continuous work being provided to these families. I still remember the gratitude and happiness of those people, who benefited directly from his intervention.

Another significant contribution was his role in organizing a large Vinayagar procession in Natham. He invited both government officials and community leaders to participate, creating an event that brought together nearly 400 social workers and volunteers. I was fortunate to attend the gathering. The event reflected his ability to unite people across backgrounds and inspire collective action for the common good.

In 1997, when I was serving in another administrative position, I once again had the opportunity to work alongside him on various community development activities. During that period, I came to appreciate even more deeply his sincerity, dedication, and commitment to public welfare.

One of ASSEFA's major achievements under Annachi's leadership was the establishment of the Sirungattupatti educational campus. Spread across 49 acres, the campus provided opportunities for nearly 240 children to receive quality education. Alongside education, facilities such as hostels and sports grounds were also developed. The institution grew steadily and became a centre of learning and opportunity for rural children.

I still recall with pride the occasion when the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran (M.G.R.), visited the campus. He appreciated the institution's work and publicly praised the efforts being undertaken there.

Annachi's life was dedicated to serving others. His work transformed communities, created opportunities for countless families, and demonstrated what can be achieved through vision, perseverance, and compassion. Though he is no longer physically with us, the institutions he built and the lives he touched continue to stand as a living testament to his remarkable legacy.

May his memory continue to inspire future generations.



Lasting change to countless families

VIII
4



A.Amala Mary

President, Perumalpatti Sarva Seva Education Committee
Director, Santhigram Dairy Development Project, Natham

I come from Perumalpatti village in Natham Taluk, Dindigul District. For the people of our village, Annachi was not merely a development leader; he was a guiding force who transformed lives in meaningful and lasting ways.

One of the earliest contributions I remember was his effort to improve housing conditions in our village. Many families were living in thatched houses, and through ASSEFA's support, these were gradually replaced with more secure tiled homes. For countless families, this brought not only physical safety but also dignity and hope.

Annachi placed great importance on education. Recognizing the need for quality schooling in rural areas, he acquired land through ASSEFA and established a school in Perumalpatti. This created educational opportunities for village children who otherwise would have had limited access to learning. Many families continue to benefit from the vision he had for education and the future of rural children.

Healthcare was another area where he made a significant impact. Through ASSEFA, medical services were brought directly to villages, ensuring that people who lacked access to healthcare could receive treatment and support. His concern for people's well-being extended beyond infrastructure; it reflected his genuine care for rural communities.

Annachi also worked tirelessly to improve livelihoods. Through financial assistance and development programmes, he supported families in goat rearing, cattle rearing, and poultry farming. These initiatives helped many rural households strengthen their incomes and improve their quality of life.

One of his most significant contributions was the introduction and expansion of dairy development programmes. Through cattle-rearing initiatives, families gained access not only to a stable source of income but also to better nutrition. Dairy development became an important pathway for improving livelihoods across many villages.

He further strengthened this effort by creating organized milk procurement systems. At a time when farmers often struggled to receive fair prices for their milk, ASSEFA established milk collection centres that purchased milk directly from producers. This ensured better returns for farmers and contributed significantly to improving household incomes.

His vision for economic empowerment continued through innovative community-based financial programmes. Savings and livelihood initiatives encouraged people to build financial security and access resources for their future needs. These programmes benefited large numbers of rural families and helped strengthen community resilience.

Annachi's work was deeply rooted in the ideals of Vinoba Bhave and the Bhoodan Movement. Through the redistribution and productive use of donated land, he helped ensure that landless and poor families could benefit from opportunities for livelihood and self-reliance. He saw this not merely as development work, but as a service to humanity.

Through village assemblies and community meetings, he listened carefully to people's needs and worked to address them. Whether the issue was housing, water, saplings, livestock, education, or livelihoods, he sought practical solutions that would benefit the entire community. In many ways, people felt that he cared for villages with the same commitment and responsibility that a government would.

For us, Annachi was a leader who dedicated his life to serving others. His contributions touched every aspect of rural life and brought lasting change to countless families. The benefits of his work continue to be visible in our villages today.

We remember him with deep gratitude and respect. His legacy lives on in the communities he strengthened and in the lives he transformed.





Family Reflections

1. L.Pandiarajan
2. Dr. R.T.P.Rani Pandiarajan
3. L.Selvi Ganesan
4. K.Ganesan



Beyond Personal Relationship

IX

1



L.Pandiarajan

My personal age and the existence of ASSEFA are almost the same, and this rare alignment gives me a deep sense of connection with Annachi and the journey of ASSEFA. I have walked alongside him through much of this journey and witnessed, stage by stage, the growth of ASSEFA — people joining, growing, and at times leaving — yet the institution continued to expand and distinguish itself among development organizations in India.

In my view, ASSEFA's greatest strength has been its ability to adapt its strategies whenever the organization or environment demanded change. I take great pride in having witnessed this evolution from the very beginning.

My relationship with Annachi is woven through countless memories from childhood onwards. I fondly remember him patiently teaching me how to ride a bicycle, helping me with my homework, walking with me to his office, and involving me in small household chores.

L. Pandiarajan *– Eldest son of Annachi, is a postgraduate from in Eco. Ag, Wageningen University, Holland and a Masters in Viticulture & Enology, Germany. After serving as a junior scientist at the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, he joined ASSEFA and contributed to livelihood development and children's education initiatives in Thiruvannamalai district for nearly 3 decades. He currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd..*



One of my happiest childhood memories is going to school with Annachi on his Bullet motorcycle. Later, when I showed interest in riding on my own, he taught me patiently using the same bike.

Annachi was a person of immense patience, discipline, integrity, and foresight. He carried deep love and affection within him, though he rarely expressed it openly. More than anything else, he taught me perseverance through his own lifelong commitment to ASSEFA and its mission.

He encouraged me to carry forward his legacy and introduced me to the ideas of Vinoba Bhave and Mahatma Gandhi. He gave me the opportunity to spend nearly two months at Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Ashram in Paunar near Wardha, and later urged me to spend time at the Keithan Ashram in the Kodaikanal hills to understand Gandhian constructive work.

Even today, I vividly remember people at the ashram — including Vinoba Bhave's elder brother, Saint Shivaji Bhave — speaking with admiration about Annachi's devotion to the Bhoodan movement and the way he had made it his life mission across India. Though I was very young then, those memories remain fresh in my mind. Today, I feel immense pride in being his son and in continuing to work in the same path.

Annachi would often take me to the Gandhi Museum in Madurai and to Sarvodaya Ilakkiya Pannai, where I had the opportunity to meet and interact with several noted Gandhians such as Jagannathan ji, Krishnammal, Prof. Jayaprakash ji, Pandian ji, Chandra Paul ji, and many others.

Forty years ago, overseas travel was uncommon, especially for someone from our background. Yet I still remember Annachi travelling abroad in his simple vesti, khadi shirt, and shoulder bag, as casually as if he were visiting a nearby town. He had travelled to almost every part of the world during the early years of ASSEFA.

When I spoke about this at school, no one believed me. Once, when my teacher asked me to bring my father to collect my progress card, I said he was in Paris. The following week, I said he was in Italy. The entire class — including the teacher — thought I was making it up. Later, when they realized it was true, my teacher would regularly ask me about my father's travels and even request perfumes from abroad. Among classmates and neighbours, he came to be affectionately called "Ulagam Sutrum Valiban."

Annachi's development philosophy was simple and clear:
"Go to the rural people, work with them, involve them in every stage of development, evolve need-based programmes, train them, and eventually leave the development in their own hands."

He always believed in a holistic approach. Women, youth, and children all had a place in the development process. His conviction was that no one should be excluded.

One of Annachi's greatest strengths was his ability to build strong local teams. He trained ordinary people with such confidence and patience that they could successfully manage even large and complex projects. Many prominent figures in the development sector today are, in one way or another, products of Annachi's mentorship.

In his rural development work, Annachi prioritized land development and agriculture. He often said that food production would remain fundamental as long as the world existed. Inspired by Vinoba Bhave, his favourite focus areas were "Matha, Gomatha, and Bhoomatha" — women, cattle rearing, and land development.

I had the opportunity to work in two very different projects under his guidance: a highland development programme and the tsunami relief and rehabilitation programme along the coast. Since both were relatively new initiatives for ASSEFA,

I was able to closely observe Annachi's methods, planning, and approach. He never rested until project offices were established and programmes were functioning effectively.

While many organizations that came during the tsunami period focused mainly on short-term relief and gradually withdrew, Annachi took a longer view. Alongside relief efforts, he organized women's groups, formed Mutual Benefit Trusts, established schools, healthcare clinics, child resource centres, and livelihood institutions such as the Sarvodaya Livelihood Mutual Benefit Trust (SLMBT), ensuring that the work would continue long after the tsunami had passed.

Similarly, in the highland development programme, he initiated housing schemes, toilet construction, RO drinking water systems, marketing support for crops like coffee and pepper, and even community colleges to encourage youth to remain connected to agriculture and rural livelihoods.

To conclude, my relationship with Annachi is one of the greatest blessings of my life. He has been my pillar during difficult times and my greatest supporter during moments of success. The values he instilled in me — honesty, resilience, compassion, and commitment to work — are the greatest gifts I have received.

I remain deeply grateful for his presence in my life and strive to carry forward his legacy in a manner that would make him proud.

We often hear of great leaders such as Gandhiji, Vinoba ji, J.C. Kumarappa, and Jayaprakash Narayan who dedicated themselves to the upliftment of the poor. I consider myself fortunate not only to have known someone who embodied those ideals, but also to have had the privilege of working alongside him as his son.

I am reminded here of Vinoba Bhave's words about Gandhiji:

"He is not merely a person; he is an idea."

The same can truly be said of Annachi. Individuals may pass away, but ideas continue to evolve, inspire, and guide future generations.



Annachi : A River that continues to Flow



Dr. R.T.P.Rani Pandiarajan

There is a profound difference between speaking about someone while they are still with us and writing about them after they are gone. When a beloved person departs, memories become intertwined with a deep sense of loss. As I write these reflections about our beloved Annachi, I do so with a heavy heart and immense gratitude for the indelible mark he has left on my life.

I first met Annachi nearly thirty years ago on a beautiful evening when he and my mother-in-law visited our home. That very first meeting drew me into both his family and the ASSEFA family. Within a few days of my marriage to Pandiarajan, Annachi asked me to visit the ASSEFA programme centres around Pooriyampakkam and entrusted me with my first responsibility—supporting school healthcare activities. Soon afterwards, he encouraged me to visit other schools and children in the Uthiramerur region.

Dr. R.T.P.Rani, *daughter-in-law of Annachi and wife of L. Pandiarajan, is a distinguished gynecologist who has dedicated nearly three decades to promoting maternal and child healthcare in the Gingee, Marakkanam, and Cuddalore regions. Through her compassionate service, she has also actively supported children's education and community well-being, making a lasting impact on the lives of countless families.*



During my stay at Pooriyampakkam, heavy rains caused severe flooding in the surrounding villages. Annachi took me along with Mr. T.K. Chinnaswamy, the Administrator, to assess the damage and plan relief efforts. We distributed groceries and bedsheets and organized health camps for women and children in the affected communities. This became my first field experience in development work and my first opportunity to closely observe Annachi's leadership in action.

A month later, he asked whether I would be interested in working with ASSEFA and taking on greater responsibilities. At that time, I had no clear answer and simply smiled. Looking back, that simple question changed the course of my life.

In 1997, while our family was visiting Tiruvannamalai with Annachi, he spoke about a new integrated development project in the Gingee region, supported by the Basque Government of Spain for a period of three years. He invited us to take up the challenge, and we eventually moved to Gingee to initiate the programme.

The project aimed to improve the livelihoods of 3,000 women across three blocks and included healthcare services through a health centre, outpatient facilities, and a labour ward. During one of his review visits, Annachi suggested that we should also start educational programmes for the children of beneficiary families. He firmly believed that empowering women and educating children must go hand in hand. From that vision emerged a matriculation school and six primary schools in the region, laying a strong foundation for educational development.

One of his statements has remained with me ever since: "Schools are meant for children; children are not meant for schools." These words reflected his deep understanding of education as a means of nurturing children rather than merely fitting them into rigid systems.

This was how Annachi gradually drew me into development work, giving me invaluable experience in managing educational and healthcare programmes. One quality I deeply admired was his leadership style. Once he entrusted a responsibility, he never interfered unnecessarily. Instead, he offered guidance whenever needed and gave people the freedom to grow.

His personal life reflected remarkable simplicity. He ate small portions slowly and never wasted food. He never washed his hands on his plate. Since he travelled extensively, he accepted whatever food was available without complaint. At home, he preferred simple meals and often asked for rasam and vathal. His simplicity was not a matter of convenience but a way of life.

Annachi had a rare ability to connect with people from every walk of life, regardless of age, education, or economic background. His sense of humour, wisdom, and warmth naturally attracted people. He could speak with a village farmer, an academic scholar, or an international visitor with equal ease and comfort.

I often saw him travelling by ordinary KB buses between Madurai and Chennai. Despite his stature, he remained deeply grounded.

He loved children immensely, though he did not always express his affection openly. When I handed my first daughter to him, he appeared hesitant to hold her. Yet he would quietly observe her gestures and movements with great delight. Over time, I understood that this was his own gentle way of expressing love.

He constantly encouraged staff and young people to cultivate the habit of reading. I was always inspired by his disciplined routine. He woke up early, went for walks, wrote letters, and carefully read newspapers. He was particularly fond of coffee and never missed an opportunity to discuss current affairs. He enjoyed watching cricket and loved reading spiritual and development literature. Among his favourite authors was Leo Tolstoy.

Whenever I visited him in the office, he would quietly curl his handkerchief in his palm to conceal his snuff box. Looking up, he would ask warmly, "Enna amma?" I would quickly brief him about the progress of our work and prepare to leave. Turning to the person nearby, he would often joke, "Do you understand what Rani said? She is like a train that comes and leaves the station!" Everyone would laugh, but what amazed me was that he always understood exactly what I meant. It reflected both his wit and his attentiveness.

I was also fortunate to interact with Mairead Corrigan Maguire, the Nobel Peace Laureate from Ireland, when she accompanied Annachi to a women's conference in Gingee attended by nearly 500 women members. During that visit, she inaugurated our Sarva Seva Matriculation School. Today, I take great pride in the fact that my second daughter studied in that very school and now serves there as a teacher, continuing Annachi's legacy in her own way.

Annachi initiated the monthly newsletter Salaram and encouraged me to write articles on the health of women and children based on my field experiences. The articles were well received by women's group members and ASSEFA staff. In 2015, when I met the Gandhian leader Krishnammal Jagannathan at Pooriyampakkam, she appreciated the articles and encouraged me to continue writing. These efforts contributed to greater health awareness among rural women.

Annachi appreciated the initiative and often expressed his desire to compile the articles into a book. We hope to fulfil that wish by publishing the collection this year.

Like everyone else, I vividly remember the devastating tsunami of December 2004. Annachi immediately travelled to the affected coastal regions and mobilized experienced ASSEFA teams. Alongside him, I visited many of the affected areas in Marakkanam, Puducherry, and Cuddalore districts.

There I witnessed his extraordinary managerial ability and strategic vision. Relief and rehabilitation were not enough for him. He believed that rebuilding lives required long-term investments in people and institutions. Under his leadership, schools, women's credit programmes, healthcare initiatives, and child resource centres were established across the affected regions. Even today, these institutions stand as enduring testimony to his vision and commitment.

Another quality I greatly admired was his sharp memory and remarkable ability to perform mental calculations. Drivers travelling with him always had to stay alert because he knew every route, turn, and landmark by heart. Whenever he said, "Take a pen and write," everyone immediately became attentive. He could estimate measurements, costs, and quantities with astonishing accuracy simply through observation.

A few months ago, I met him in Chennai with my daughters. When we asked about his health, he gently changed the subject and spoke about other matters. Even while enduring pain and physical suffering, he continued to travel and work for the well-being of ASSEFA.

A few weeks before his final journey, when I met him, he spoke about his vision, the responsibilities ahead, and the legacy that needed to be carried forward. Even then, his concern was not for himself but for the future of the institutions and people he loved.

Annachi fought courageously against illness for a long time. He was a warrior who never surrendered. Though illness ultimately claimed his body, it could never defeat his spirit.

When he passed away, I saw tears in the eyes of countless people. Those tears reflected the extraordinary impact he had on thousands of lives. Farmers, women, children, colleagues, friends, and well-wishers all felt the loss of someone who had touched them deeply.

To me, Annachi was like a great forest river—flowing with strength and purpose, nourishing fields, removing obstacles, creating beauty, and quenching the thirst of countless lives before finally merging with the sea. Yet, just as water continues its

eternal cycle, his vision, values, and spirit will continue to flow through the institutions he built and the people he inspired.

Though he is no longer physically among us, his journey continues in each of us who carry forward his dreams.

Annachi lives on—in our work, in our values, and in the countless lives he transformed.





All About Eternal Love



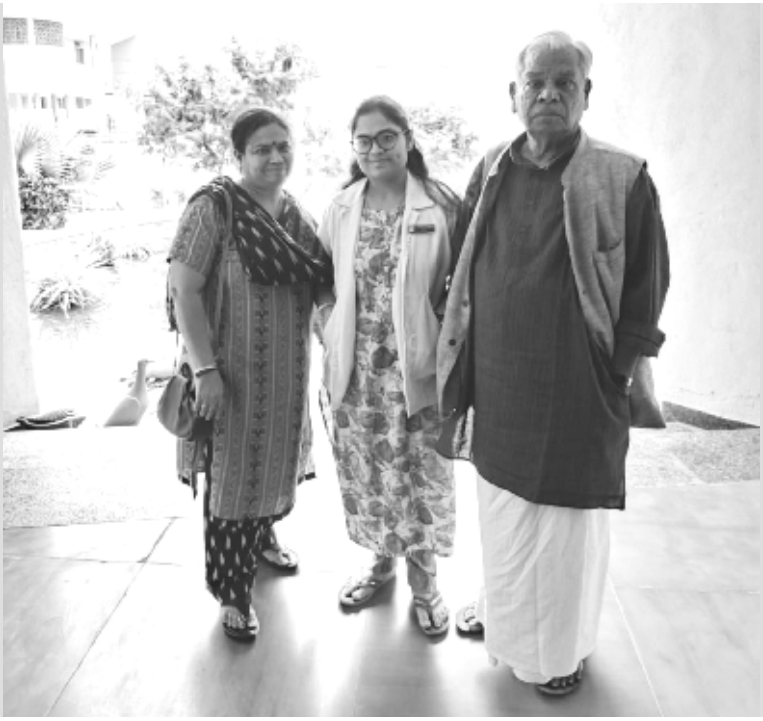
L.Selvi Ganesan

My father, Mr. S. Loganathan, founder of ASSEFA, was widely known for his dedication, sincerity, and tireless commitment to both organizational work and field service. He lived an extraordinary life and touched countless lives through his work among rural communities and the poor.

To the outside world, he was a visionary institution builder, a disciplined leader, and a man who worked relentlessly day and night for the welfare of society. But to me, he was also a father with a deeply innocent and childlike heart — full of love, kindness, simplicity, and compassion.

Even during the final months of his life, when his health had begun to weaken, he never allowed himself to slow down. With remarkable determination and mental strength, he continued encouraging himself and carrying out his responsibilities until the very end.

L. Selvi, *daughter of Annachi, is a postgraduate who actively supports her husband in marketing initiatives of agricultural products. She is also devoted to the upkeep and activities of the Annapoorani Temple at Thonugal, dedicated to the Goddess of Food, reflecting her commitment to service and community welfare.*



Two years ago, I met my father in Kalligudi. During that deeply emotional conversation, he spoke openly about the long journey of building ASSEFA from its humble beginnings into a movement that touched thousands of lives. He spoke about the early days, the struggles, the sacrifices, and the many people who stood beside him through the years — from Jawani ji to Chandrapaul ji and many others who were part of that journey.

As he narrated the hardships he endured while building the organization, tears filled his eyes. He spoke painfully about how some people had even tried to weaken and destroy the very institution he had built with such dedication and perseverance. Listening to him that day, I realized how much suffering, sacrifice, and emotional strength had been hidden behind his calm smile all these years.

Spirituality was always deeply connected to ASSEFA and to my father's vision of service.

Four years ago, at Annachi's suggestion, we began Annadhanam at the Annapoorani Temple. The moment the idea was discussed, he immediately encouraged us to begin. From then onward, every month on the sacred Pournami day, Annadhanam has been conducted continuously with devotion and care.

Today, nearly eight hundred people receive food through the Annapoorani Temple at Thonugal and the Murugan Temples in Kalligudi.

My father would often say that this service must continue to expand so that more poor and needy people in nearby villages could benefit. One of his greatest wishes was to establish a permanent daily Annadhanam scheme. With his blessings and vision guiding us, we strongly believe that one day this dream will certainly become reality.

As the work continued to grow, Annachi once told me proudly, "People around us are saying that ASSEFA has reached the next level."

After the success of the Annadhanam initiative, we launched the second phase of weekly village markets in Kalligudi, Elaiyirampannai, and Maikudi. On the very first day of the Kalligudi market, nearly three to four thousand people gathered to buy vegetables at affordable prices.

Seeing the overwhelming public response, my father repeatedly told me:

"We must always do something meaningful for the people."

Once again, with great satisfaction, he said:

"ASSEFA has reached the next level."

During the final years of his life, I had the blessing of travelling with him and working alongside him closely. Together, we fulfilled many of the dreams and goals he carried in his heart for the welfare of ordinary people. I truly believe that in the years ahead, ASSEFA will continue to grow and rise to even greater heights.

To everyone working with ASSEFA, my father often saw them as flowers in his garden.

His blessings, guidance, and spirit will remain with all forever.

As his daughter, however, my deepest memories are not of meetings, institutions, or public achievements.

They are all small moments of waiting.

When I was a child, I would often sit on the staircase in front of our house, waiting eagerly for my father to return home. Because he was constantly travelling for work and field responsibilities, there were times he came home only once a month.

But I waited happily for him every single time.

Those moments remain among the strongest and most precious memories of my childhood.

Today, he is no longer physically with me.

And yet, somewhere deep within my heart, I still continue to wait and wonder:

"When will my father come home?"

That feeling of waiting for him, longing to see him once more, and hearing his voice again will remain with me for the rest of my life.

These are the memories of a daughter who remembers her father with pride, gratitude, affection, and everlasting love.



From Family to ASSEFA

IX

4



K. Ganesan

My relationship with Annachi began at birth — with the ritual of feeding sugar water — and I am proud to say it continued until his final days. As life moved forward from my childhood, in 1994, while I was pursuing my technical education, I went with a friend to the Madurai Thamukkam Grounds to attend the silver jubilee celebration of an organization called ASSEFA. At that time, I never imagined that one day I too would immerse myself in the vast ocean called ASSEFA, nurtured by Annachi.

At the silver jubilee celebration, details of the beneficiaries of various development programmes, the number of states involved, and the many products and initiatives created through ASSEFA were all presented as part of a grand festival shaped by the vision of one man — Annachi. On the final day, a massive gathering of more than 25,000 people was presided over by

K.Ganesan, *son-in-law of Annachi and husband of L. Selvi, is an engineer with over two decades of experience in promoting dairy-based technologies and rural enterprises. He currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of ASSEFA Food Mart Company, involved in the procurement, processing, and marketing of agricultural produce through direct retail outlets and farmers' weekly markets.*



Thiru R. Venkataraman, former President of India. I was astonished to see such a huge crowd gathered around the work inspired by Annachi. Though he was the driving force behind every aspect of the event, he never sought attention. Instead, he quietly sat aside like an ordinary staff member. Yet, like the youngest member of a large family, he moved constantly among the people, guiding and directing everyone to make the celebration successful. That day, I witnessed Annachi's greatness, energy, vision, and leadership as though I were watching a remarkable story unfold before my eyes.

After that, life continued with studies and work. In 1996, Annachi's eldest son, Thiru Pandia Rajan, invited me to visit a dairy farm in the village of Uchappatti. At that time, a new dairy farm was being established there. I visited the farm and returned, never imagining that Annachi had already envisioned a work plan that would shape the next thirty years of my life. In 1998, he drew me into this sacred ocean called ASSEFA and created an inseparable bond with me.

He first sent me to oversee the dairy plants in the village of Pooriyambakkam and left me there with very little support, almost with a "sink or swim" attitude. After overcoming many hardships, I eventually understood his philosophy — he would never teach someone how to swim; instead, he would throw them into the sea and expect them to learn on their own. He believed that this was the true way to grow in life. Yet throughout all those years, he quietly watched over us without our knowledge, protecting us from sinking and ensuring that we stayed afloat.

I always admired him from a respectful distance rather than approaching him too closely. On many occasions, he would organize dairy programme meetings in different places. After holding meetings throughout the morning, afternoon, and evening, while we would only think about finishing quickly, eating, and sleeping, he would still be actively speaking on the phone. Then suddenly he would announce, "We will arrive by 11 p.m. for another meeting." After reaching there, he would continue discussions until dawn and then casually ask, "Shall we go for one more meeting?" Seeing all of us exhausted, he would finally take pity and say, "Let us continue tomorrow," before moving on to his next assignment. We, meanwhile, would quietly rush off for rest. It was not only his work that amazed me; I realized repeatedly that no one could match his capacity for hard work.

What impressed me even more was his complete humility. While he provided vehicles to project in-charges and managers of different programmes, he himself often travelled by ordinary government buses to project locations. His simplicity deeply impressed everyone around him. Through his conduct and relentless work ethic, he demonstrated that one must remain grounded while working with dedication and focus.

Annachi ensured that every initiative began with ordinary people and grew to its fullest potential by entrusting responsibilities to capable individuals. Once a programme was established, he would move on to execute the next vision. This was how he constantly kept himself energized. Astonishingly, he always carried plans for the next twenty or thirty years in his mind.

I still remember one such occasion during meetings held at a farm in Thonukkal. He confidently said that within fifteen years a temple, a food mart, a marriage hall, and many other institutions would emerge there — and exactly as he predicted, it happened. Behind all these efforts was his deep intention that such infrastructure should benefit poor and economically vulnerable village communities.

Without burdening anyone with his own needs, he lived as a role model for all of us. Despite reaching great heights, I was always amazed to see him personally stand in front and take care of every guest of the organization like an ordinary volunteer. Through ASSEFA, the achievements he accomplished in rural education, healthcare, agriculture, livelihoods, and economic development are truly incomparable.

He served tirelessly until his final breath and departed only after fulfilling his duty. The other day, I jokingly said that perhaps he had gone to heaven, met the people there, and immediately organized "ASSEFA Heaven Land Development Work," assigning responsibilities to everyone there as well.

Today, while many continue to study Gandhiji, Vinoba Bhave, and other great leaders, saints, and visionaries through books, I often wonder how many people are fortunate enough to live closely with someone who embodied such extraordinary qualities in everyday life.

For someone like me, who always spoke endlessly, what has taught me silence today is not time, but the loss of the person I loved the most.





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The Legacy Lives On

Reading the reflections, tributes, memories, and personal stories in this volume, one theme emerges again and again: people remember Annachi not only for what he built, but also for who he was; for transforming not only institutions but also the most intimate aspects of people's lives.

They remember the listener before the leader. The mentor before the institution builder.

The man who sat quietly at the back of a village meeting rather than at the centre of the stage.

The person who could discuss Gandhian philosophy, rural finance, education, dairy development, social justice, women's empowerment, and community institutions with equal ease — and then laugh with a child over a whistling contest or enquire whether a visitor had eaten enough vadais for breakfast.

Across continents and generations, from village women to international development practitioners, from students to social entrepreneurs, from farmers to academics, the memories in these pages reveal a remarkable consistency. Everyone encountered the same person: humble, deeply observant, practical, compassionate, and unwaveringly committed to the welfare of others.

Annachi often spoke of Sarvodaya — the welfare of all. For him, it was never merely an idea. It was a way of living. He believed that people possessed immense strength when they came together in trust, dignity,

and collective action. Through ASSEFA and the many institutions that grew around it, he demonstrated that development was not about delivering services, but about enabling people to discover their own power, potential and shape their own future.

For nearly seven decades of public life, until the very end, he remained a student, a thinker, a builder, and in service of the people. Even in his later years, his mind remained occupied not by what had been achieved, but by what still remained to be done — a school to strengthen, a farmer to support, a village to empower, a young person to encourage, a new idea to nurture.

The stories collected here form only a small glimpse of a life that touched countless others whose names may never appear in these pages. Yet perhaps that is fitting. Annachi himself never measured success by recognition. He measured it by whether a family lived with greater dignity, whether a woman gained confidence, whether a child found an opportunity, whether a village became more self-reliant.

As we close this memorial volume, we do not simply look back on a life completed. We look forward to a responsibility inherited.

The banyan tree that Annachi planted continues to grow.

Its roots run deep through the villages, institutions, friendships, and communities he nurtured. Its branches continue to offer shade to future generations. And its seeds have travelled far beyond the places where he lived and worked.

May those who read these pages find inspiration not only in what Annachi accomplished, but in the values by which he lived: simplicity, humility, courage, service, and an abiding faith in people.

His journey, in a physical form may have ended, but the spirit of Sarvodaya continues to live on.

- Panchu , Nisha , Arunagiri, Kumar
(Editorial team)



Annachi as a Writer



Annachi was the kind of a writer whose words touched readers across generations — from six-year-old children to sixty-year-old adults.

In ‘Vindhai Ulagam’, he entered the world of a child with wonder and imagination. In ‘Yaarukku Yaar Edhiri?’, he explored the challenge of living harmoniously in a complex world, inviting readers to reflect on

relationships, conflict, and human nature. In 'Pudhyugam Pirakiradhu', animals come alive as storytellers, carrying profound messages about life, society, and our shared future.

What made Annachi's writing remarkable was its simplicity. He wrote with clarity and warmth, yet beneath every story, every character lay deep wisdom. His books gave voice to ordinary people and their everyday struggles often overlooked in mainstream literature. Through memorable characters and vivid storytelling, thougthful about even choice of names, he drew readers into worlds that felt real, intimate, and deeply human.

Until the very end of his life, Annachi continued to write and encouraged others to write. He believed writing was not merely an act of expression, but a way of preserving experience, sharing and building something larger than the everyday.

Though Annachi is no longer with us, his voice continues to speak through his books. In every page, readers encounter his compassion, humour, wisdom, and unwavering faith in humanity. Annachi lives on — in his words, in his ideas, and in the generations of readers he continues to inspire.

If one seeks to wander into the quiet corners of the human heart, journey through the rural landscapes that shape India's soul, or simply learn to smile at life's joys and contradictions, Annachi's books are faithful companions. They are treasures that keep giving — offering fresh insight, gentle wisdom, and enduring hope with every reading; like an old wise man sitting by your side and sharing a slice of his well-lived life.



Dearest

ANNACHI

You walked,
the long roads and the unexplored paths of this country,
and inspired many of us to walk beside you.

You loved,
everyone around you so deeply,
and taught us, how to love without measure.

You laughed,
like a child who had never lost wonder,
and inspired us to turn heavy moments into light.

You listened,
beyond all spoken words,
urging us to respond to pain in people's hearts.

You gave,
from a life shaped by simplicity and faith,
illuminating for us, a new path towards abundance.

You stood,
with the forgotten, the landless, and the unheard,
and gave us the strength, to stand firmly beside them.

You dreamed,
for our villages, for children, for women and families,
and inspired us to dream even more boldly.

Annachi,
you did not merely pass through this world—
you showed the world,
how deeply meaningful, a human life can be.

- Nisha Subramaniam