

# Blue Hues of Sangupiddy



The rocky shore separates land from sea

**Shrouded in the shadows of night, the Sangupiddy Bridge shines bright, transporting travellers across waters while aweing them with its mystical and mesmerising setting.**

**Words** Keshini de Silva | **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda and Vishwathan Tharmakulasingam



Prawn fishing fences zig-zag across the blue waters

“Slush... Slush...”, the waters lapped lazily against the concrete, dozing off with daylight into the night.

On the shortest route from Colombo to Jaffna, we were cruising along the A32, which crosses the Jaffna lagoon through the Sangupiddy Bridge. The causeway lounging on the shallow Jaffna lagoon waters stretched on effortlessly. A smooth tarmac that weightlessly floated over aquamarine waters, tinted by the electric

blue of the after dusk sky. The final rays of light offered us glimpses of prawn nets flanking the bridge on either side. Salty gusts hit hard at our faces and roars of the ocean filled our ears and one question rushed through my mind; were we really on land or on boat?

Fifteen minutes into our journey darkness cloaked the bridge, it was time for the Sangupiddy Bridge to shine. The solar powered lamps sprung into action, lighting up in quick succession; an illusion of a domino effect. And then there was light once more. Under the twinkling skies the bridge almost swayed in mystique.

Connecting Pooneryn in Kilinochchi and Sangupiddy in the Jaffna peninsula, the causeway is usually known as Sangupiddy bridge, however those from Kilinochchi fondly refer to it as Pooneryn bridge. Discussions to connect the two areas date back to the 1930s, however potential hindrances to traditional fishing routes were a concern. Hence the bridge's unique design, unlike any other in Sri Lanka. A high slanted overpass was crafted to allow fishing boats to pass under

Before Sangupiddy bridge, the only land route to the Jaffna Peninsula was on the A9 via Elephant Pass causeway. Usually commuters and goods were transported to their destinations by ferry.

The 288-metre bridge, reduces travel time to the northern peninsula from the West coast, while the journey from Colombo is now at least three hours shorter. Even after darkness sets in lorries and motorcycles laden with paddy, firewood and hay, ply back and forth.



A fishing hut on stilts rests close to the shore

We spotted a leisure spot, curving into the ocean off the road before we reached the famed arched overpass of the bridge. It was a vantage point that offered the best views of the causeway and its environs. Granite rocks that fortified Sangupiddy shimmered in the light. The waters now shone in jade under the shadows of night. Winds nudged the lagoon waters towards the rocks and they grudgingly relented, creating soft ripples in the still waters that do not run deep. A hut erected by prawn fishermen nests atop the waters. Looking back, views of the sleepy Pooneryn waved us goodbye.

The skin on our salt-air beaten faces tingled with freshness. Tears welled in our eyes as they strained to capture the magic of the sight, eyelids struggling against balmy blows.

The road tilted before us as it arched over the fishing route. Concrete giants wielded strong arms that lifted the unique feature of the Sangupiddy bridge. Butterflies danced in our stomachs as we climbed. Our flanks for a brief moment saw nothing but sea, soft waves glimmering in the dim light of the sky.

Farther before us a dark mass flickered invitingly; it was Jaffna's splendiferous shoreline. We sloped towards it, excitement gurgling in our guts, ending our

journey over the lagoon waters in a quick stretch.

On the shores of the landlocked peninsula of spice our droopy eyes looked back at the glimmering Sangupiddy bridge in silent gratitude for a scenic and swift journey.

