

#PREM GANAPATHY

From a Robbed Teen to a Global Dosa Empire

Returning home defeated was not an option. In that moment of crisis, he made a life-defining decision, he would stay in Mumbai and carve out his own destiny



On a crowded platform at Bandra station in 1990, a 17-year-old boy from Tamil Nadu stood lost and alone. He had arrived in Mumbai with just 200 in his pocket and a head full of hope, chasing the promise of a better life. But within moments of stepping into the bustling city fate dealt him a harsh blow, he was robbed of his money and belongings. Stripped of everything he had, he found himself stranded in an unfamiliar place, with no plan, no contacts, and nowhere to go.

As he stood there, overwhelmed and uncertain, a stranger noticed his distress. The man, a fellow Tamilian, approached him with concern. Sensing the boy's helplessness, he took him to a nearby temple where they tried to collect money to send him back home to Chennai. It seemed like the most practical solution. But the boy refused. Returning home defeated was not an option. In that moment of crisis, he made a life-defining decision, he would stay in Mumbai and carve out his own destiny.

That boy was Prem Ganapathy. With no resources and little experience, Prem began at the bottom. He found work in Mahim, cleaning dishes for a meager wage. The job was exhausting, but it gave him a foothold in the city. Determined to move forward, he took on multiple jobs at once, saving every rupee he could. Over time, he gathered enough to take a small but significant step, he hired a handcart, bought a stove and some basic utensils, and started selling food outside Vashi railway station. The journey was far from smooth. Authorities

frequently seized his cart, disrupting his business and forcing him to start over again and again. But Prem's resolve never wavered. He invited his brothers to join him, and together they built something stronger. They focused on maintaining hygiene and consistency, which gradually earned them a loyal customer base, especially among college students.

Innovation became their strength. Prem began experimenting with dosas, introducing unique flavours that appealed to a wide audience. What started as a simple food cart soon transformed into something much bigger. With the rise of the internet and growing exposure, their menu expanded rapidly; 26 varieties of dosas, including fusion options like Schwan and paneer chili. By 2002, they were offering an astonishing 105 varieties.

But Prem's vision extended beyond a street cart. He dreamed of having a proper space, a place where his brand could grow. That dream took shape when he was offered a spot in Centre One Mall in Vashi. It marked a turning point. Soon after, in 2009, the brand began expanding through franchises. The first international outlet opened in New Zealand, followed by expansions into Dubai and Oman.

Today, Dosa Plaza stands as a testament to Prem Ganapathy's resilience and vision, with outlets spread across three continents. From a penniless teenager stranded on a railway platform to a global entrepreneur, his journey is a powerful reminder that determination, hard work, and the courage to persevere can turn even the bleakest beginnings into extraordinary success stories.



"Now, you are my prisoner"



● Verna Mohon

lieutenant Hermann Ritter, a 51-year-old, Austrian naval officer, reluctantly in the service of Nazi Germany, was exhausted, hungry and bone-achingly cold.

Six days previously, he, and his small command, had set out from their base at Hansa Bugt, situated on one of those frozen tendrils of land that fringe the north-east coast of Greenland, and headed south.

They had crossed treacherous ice fields and made their way along the trappers' trails that snaked around the feathering of frozen fjords. At times, these trails crossed the fjords directly. It was a perilous gamble to sledge over the frozen sea ice, but they did it.

Under Ritter's command were four German soldiers. Two travelled on a sledge hauled by a team of Greenland dogs, whilst the other two slogged on foot. A second sledge, heavily laden with supplies, was driven by a Danish hunter called Marius Jensen. By reputation, he was an exceptional dog musher. He was 31-years-old; 20 years younger than Ritter.

Ritter and Jensen travelled together, but it would have been too dangerous to add the weight of a passenger to the sledge; only the driver could stand on the runners. There was no telling when a crack in the ice would plunge it into the Arctic waters beneath. Hermann Ritter, despite being the older man, had to journey alongside on foot. He was no stranger to polar travel but this was an especially grueling journey.

His heavy wooden skis had weighty steel edges to bite into the ice when crossing frozen fjords. When traversing snow-covered hills, he strapped strips of sealskin to the undersides. These allowed the skis

to slide forward but bristled against the snow to prevent sliding backward. Where the snow had drifted, he had to shoulder his skis and tramp, lifting his ice-heavy boots as high as he could, like a soldier marching on the spot, to plough through the snow. It was all grunting, unrelenting, hard work.

It was a far cry from the life Ritter had known years earlier, when the Arctic was a place of adventure rather than war.

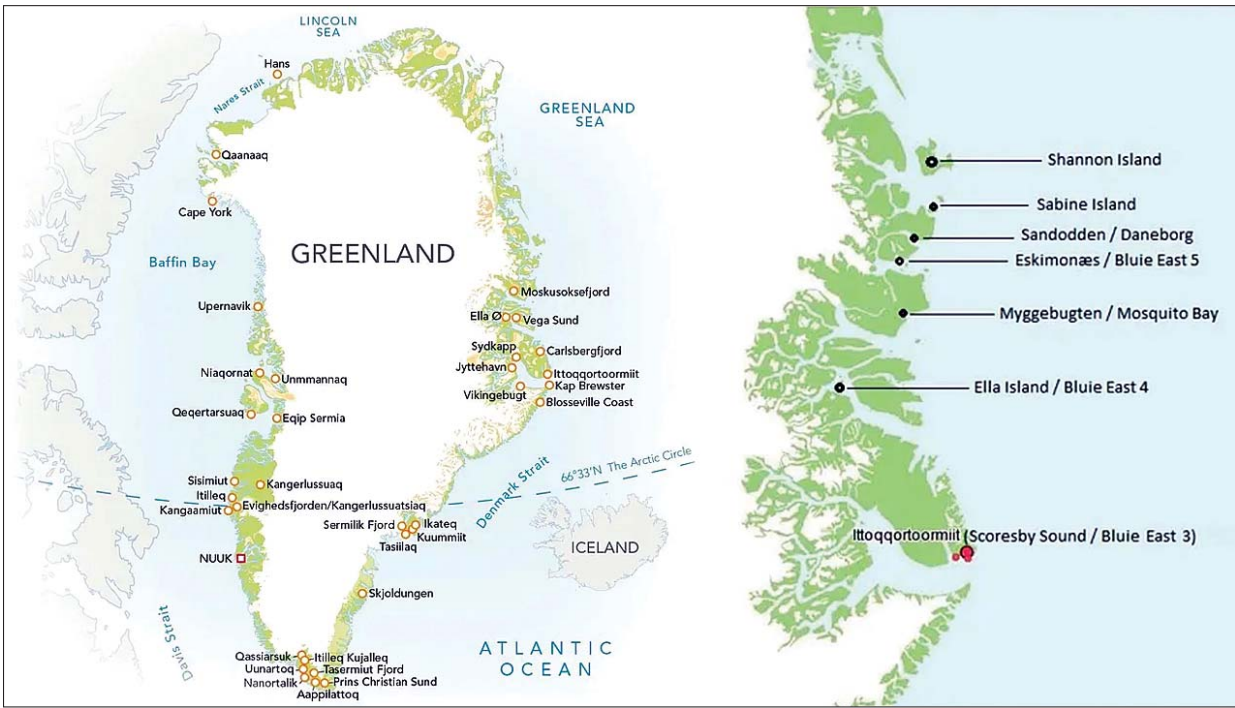
At this time of year, daytime temperatures could rise to between -13°C and -7°C (8°F to 20°F), but at night, they dropped to around -25°C (-13°F). However, in the Arctic, April is known for its merciless winds, causing the wind chill factor to plummet to -40°C (-40°F). Adding to their discomfort was 20 hours of daylight, making it hard for the body to rest.

Trappers' huts, basic wooden cabins dotted every 12 miles or so along the coastal trails, offered some respite from the constant glare, the savage cold and the lacerating wind, but if supplies weren't to run out before they got to the next main station, travelers could stay only briefly. Ritter's patrol reached a trapper's hut at Myggebugen on April 18th, where they sheltered from a storm, and rested the dogs. Greenland dogs can travel from 6-8 hours a day. Depending on the terrain and weight of the load, they can cover around 20 miles a day. They are fed once a day, at the end of the journey. They then require around 12 hours rest before the next haul.

THE SWITCH

The next day, April 19th, Ritter commanded his four soldiers to head for Ella Island, where there were reports of an Allied weather station. Their orders were to destroy it. The trapper, Marius Jensen, had drawn a map for them the previous

#DUEL ON ICE



The island of Greenland, showing its central ice sheet, and a map of the North East, showing key locations in this story.



Armband designating the Sledge Patrol as military personnel.

evening. Ritter's plan was to stay behind with Jensen and make further reconnaissance in the area. He saluted the men as they set off and then stepped back into the cabin to ready himself for his mission. Hermann Ritter and Marius Jensen were now alone.

Outside, Jensen was finishing up harnessing his dog team. In preparation for their scouting trip, Ritter had propped his skis, ski-poles and heavy bolt-action rifle (a Mauser Karabiner 98k) against the sledge, and then gone back inside. From within the hut, Ritter heard the distinctive heart-stopping, click-clack/click-clack of the rifle bolt, a round was now in the chamber. He perhaps assumed a polar bear had been sighted, but when he appeared at the door, he found himself staring down the barrel of his

own rifle. Marius Jensen said simply: "Now, you are my prisoner." He probably said it in German and the emphasis would almost certainly have been on the word 'my' because, until that moment, Jensen had technically been Ritter's prisoner. It was a switch.

Marius Jensen was not just an arctic hunter and expert dog musher; he was a member of Denmark's North-East Greenland Sledge Patrol and he had been captured by Ritter and his men several weeks earlier, on March 26. But why were Jensen and Ritter in Greenland in the first place?

THE WEATHER WAR

With overwhelming force, German forces occupied Denmark on April 9, 1940. Despite continued, courageous resistance from the population, the government had little choice other than to co-operate. While the Danish government was under German rule, Greenland's link to Danish sovereignty was effectively severed.

After a brief period of diplomatic manoeuvrings, Eske Brun, one of two Danish governors, who had run the colony up until then, declared autonomous control of the entire island. He set up headquarters in Nuuk and declared support for the Allied cause. The other governor, Aksel Svane, took himself off to Washington as a liaison.

In 1941, the United States



Celebrating a Healthy Start

National Oatmeal Day, observed every October 29, honours one of the healthiest and most versatile breakfast foods. Oats are rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals, making them an excellent choice for heart health, digestion, and sustained energy. From classic porridge to overnight oats, smoothies, and baked treats, oatmeal can be enjoyed in countless delicious ways. On this day, nutritionists, chefs, and food enthusiasts encourage people to incorporate oats into their diets, share recipes, and discover new flavours. National Oatmeal Day is not just about food, it's about embracing a wholesome, nourishing start to the day.



PART:1

operations. The North East of the island provided the most relevant data. North Atlantic weather generally moves from West to East; whoever controlled the Greenland coast had a crystal ball for the weather that would hit Europe 24 to 48 hours later. Obviously, these meteorological reports were of equal interest to the Germans.

THE SLEDGE PATROL

Eske Brun, the governor, was all too aware of this and so, in 1941, he set up the North-East Greenland Sledge Patrol. He initially recruited 15 men, 10 Danes, 1 Norwegian, and 4 native Greenlanders. All were trappers and hunters; they all knew the trails and the terrain. Marius Jensen was among them. They operated in pairs and relied entirely on dog sledges.

Their task was to patrol 700 miles of uninhabited coastline in search of German weather stations; a beat that stretched from the far north as far down as Scoresbysund. Below there, the island was 'relatively' more populated and the locals could keep an eye out for any German activity.

The North East Greenland coast is fringed with vast fjords, encased with fingers of rocky upland. For most of the year, the crags are snow-covered and the fjords are sealed with sea ice. During a single 'spring patrol', a two-man team would typically cover over 2,500 miles (4,000 km) of travel, weaving in and out of the fjords to ensure that no Nazi weather stations were operating in the shadows of the mountains.

Dog sledges were by far the best way to navigate the hostile terrain, not least of all because they could carry tents and several weeks' worth of food supplies, ammunition and sacks of coal for the huts.

There was a savage beauty to the land but travel was both arduous and hazardous. Direct routes often

assumed temporary security responsibility for the island and set up vital airbases.

Greenland was a large and strategically important landmass. It was an unsinkable aircraft carrier, situated between North America and Britain, which allowed short-distance combat planes to cross the Atlantic for service in Europe. Greenland's capital Nuuk sits almost exactly halfway between Washington, D.C. and Copenhagen. Aside from its value as a refuelling base, Greenland was crucial for the gathering of weather intelligence. Before satellites, weather patterns sweeping into Europe could be predicted from weather stations in Greenland and radioed to both Washington and London.

This was critical information for planning both air and naval



Hermann Ritter and his wife Christiane, pictured eight years earlier, at their hut in Spitsbergen.

took a path across the sea ice. When doing this, Greenland dogs were often harnessed differently to the way we see Huskies hitched in other parts of the world.

Instead of the usual train hitch-pairs of dogs running one behind the other, Greenland dogs were often arranged in a fan hitch. It spread their weight and, if they ice thinned and cracked at any point, only one or two dogs might fall through before the sledge could be stopped. In train formation, the entire team could be dragged into the watery void; sledge and driver swallowed with them.

Of equal importance to their role in transport was the dogs' role in detection. They are constantly alert to any unusual or threatening scents, and able to pick them up from as far away as three miles, depending on the wind. These may be the distant peril of a prowling polar bear or the whiff of humans hiding in a far-off hut. A good dog man knew how to interpret their signals.

Eske Brun was aware that as 'armed civilians', his patrolmen were not covered by the Geneva Convention. If caught, the enemy might execute them as spies rather than take them prisoners of war. It was not practical to put them in standard uniform. However, Governor Brun appointed them to military ranks and issued them with armbands to identify them as military personnel. That status was boosted when they were also made a reserve unit of the U.S. Army.

Crusted with ice, armbands were hard to see and the frozen fabric had a tendency to snap and fall off. It was common for the Sledge Patrol to keep an armband in their pocket, only putting it on when approaching a German Position.

To be continued...

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#CHULLI MENDOK

A Rare Spring Festival of the Aryan Valley

The festival celebrates the blooming of apricot flowers, one of the first signs that winter has ended and spring has arrived in the valley



High in the remote valleys of the ancient Indus Valley, where rugged mountains meet flowing rivers and centuries-old traditions continue to survive, a rare and vibrant celebration takes place every April. Known as the Chulli Mendok Festival, the festival marks the arrival of spring and reflects the unique cultural identity of the region's Aryan communities.

Far removed from the crowded celebrations of mainstream festivals, Chulli Mendok is deeply rooted in nature, ancestry and seasonal renewal. The festival is celebrated in the Aryan villages of Ladakh, where the changing season transforms the cold mountain landscape into a place of colour and life. The name "Chulli Mendok" itself carries symbolic meaning. "Chulli" refers to apricot, one of the most important fruits of the region, while "Mendok" means flower.

Together, the festival celebrates the blooming of apricot flowers, one of the first signs that winter has ended and spring has arrived in the valley. As the festival begins, the villages come alive with music, traditional dances and colourful attire. Men and women



wear elaborate traditional clothing decorated with flowers, ribbons and ornaments that represent joy, fertility and harmony with nature.

One of the most striking elements of the celebration is the traditional headgear worn by men, known as the Tepi. These handmade caps are carefully stitched and decorated over many months, and in some cases, may take nearly a year to complete. The tepi is not simply a piece of clothing; it is a symbol of identity, craftsmanship and pride within the Aryan community.



Today, the festival has also begun attracting travellers and cultural enthusiasts interested in experiencing the hidden heritage of Ladakh beyond its monasteries and landscapes. For visitors, Chulli Mendok offers a rare glimpse into a living tradition where nature, community and identity come together in celebration.

In the blooming apricot valleys of the Indus region, Chulli Mendok continues to remind the world that some of the richest cultural treasures survive quietly, carried forward through songs, flowers, handmade garments and the enduring spirit of ancient people.

Women adorn themselves with vibrant garments, floral arrangements and jewellery that reflect both the beauty of spring and the cultural heritage of their ancestors. Bright colours dominate the celebrations, turning the mountain villages into living canvases of tradition and festivity.

The people associated with this festival are often referred to as the Aryan tribe of Ladakh, known for preserving ancient customs and distinct cultural practices that differ from surrounding Himalayan communities. For generations, they have maintained rituals connected to agriculture, seasonal cycles and nature worship.

Chulli Mendok is not only a celebration of spring but also a way of welcoming prosperity, good harvests and community unity after the harsh winter months. Songs and dances performed during the festival often tell stories of ancestry, nature and the deep connection between the people and their land. Because of its remote location and limited exposure, Chulli Mendok remains one of India's lesser-known and rarest festivals. Yet, its uniqueness lies precisely in this authenticity. Unlike commercial celebrations shaped by tourism, the festival continues to preserve its traditional spirit and cultural depth.

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By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS

