

# THE OPEN

QUARTERLY

ii/2017



**FREE EDUCATION IS A MAJOR MEANS THROUGH WHICH THIS COUNTRY TO CREATES ITS FUTURE, ITS NATIONAL WEALTH, HUMAN CAPITAL.**

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**IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS BRITAIN THEY CURRENTLY PLAY A PROGRESSIVE ROLE BY ADVOCATING REDISTRIBUTIVE ISSUES SUCH AS EXPANSION OF UNIVERSAL FREE HEALTHCARE PROVISIONS AND INTRODUCTION OF FREE EDUCATION.**

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**“RATHER THAN FOCUSING ON WHAT WE WIN TODAY, WHICH COULD BE LOST IN A MONTH YOU HAVE TO FOCUS ON DEMANDS THAT WILL BENEFIT YOU FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS.**

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4	<b>Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Education (PGD-SNE)</b>	<b>07.01.2018</b>
5	<b>Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)</b>	<b>January</b>
6	<b>Diploma in Environmental Science</b>	<b>28.01.2018</b>
7	<b>Certificate in Wildlife Conservation and Management</b>	<b>11.02.2018</b>
8	<b>BA in Social Sciences</b>	<b>04.03.2018</b>
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10	<b>Bachelor of Pharmacy (B.Pharm)</b>	<b>04.03.2018</b>
11	<b>Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Sciences (BMLS)</b>	<b>04.03.2018</b>
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13	<b>Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS)</b>	<b>21.01.2018</b>
14	<b>Diploma in Natural Resources &amp; Ecotourism</b>	<b>14.01.2018</b>

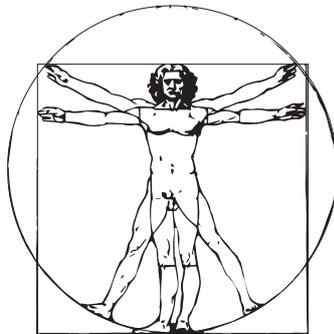
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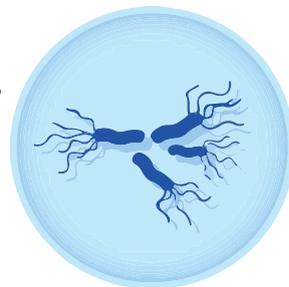
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# THE OPEN QUARTERLY

ii/2017

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY  
OF SRI LANKA

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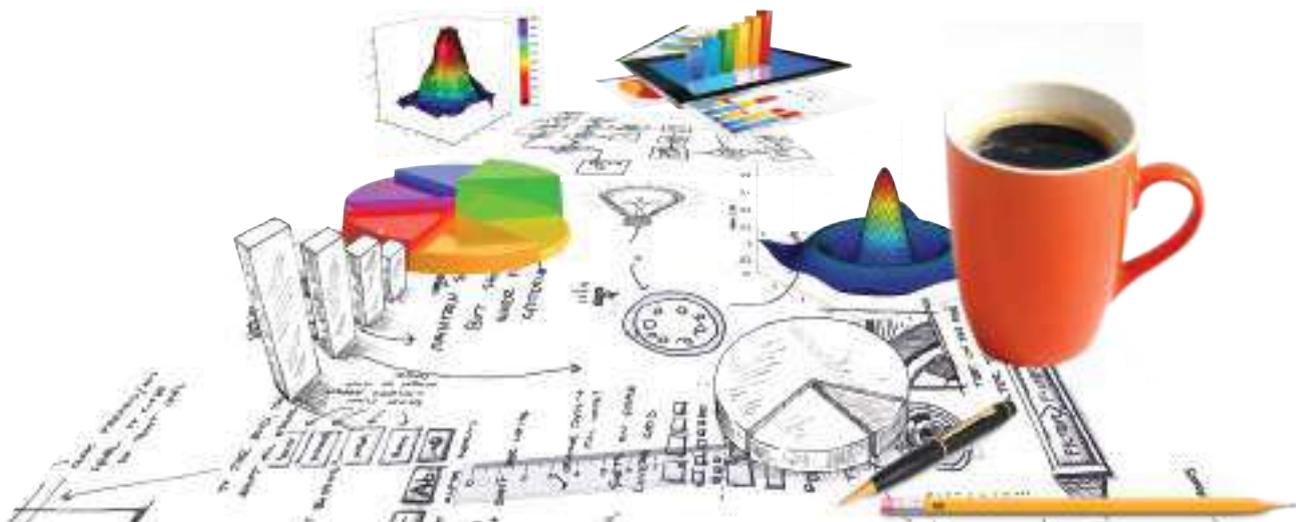
Freedom of thought, expression and identification of fundamental rights of people and their struggles to achieve them are strongly associated with rational thinking, scientific methodology and scholarship. When evaluations of Isaac Newton proved that the universe is like a perfect clock that never needed to be fixed, it inspired people to find similar mechanism that can govern human societies. Enlightenment thinker John Locke in the 17th century advocated that "power of the government to rule must come from the consent of the governed". With such ideologies people demanded power to be liberal, independent and to express themselves freely. A passage accredited to Voltaire summarizes the importance of accommodating a significant space for thesis and antithesis: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it". Accumulation of rational thought and scientific methodology expedited the material development as well as bold and new ideas regarding human rights and democracy, among other things. Our struggle for better lives, a better social structures and effective governing mechanisms, is strongly linked with liberating our people from careless and uncritical ways of thinking.

Nurturing and grooming this freedom has been a key role of the academia from the time of its establishment that goes beyond the historical institutions of Athens and Takshila. The concept of rational thought and ideological freedom resulted in revolutions to bring power to the people and constitutions that are meant to protect the will of the people.

Keeping with these academic traditions, the Open University of Sri Lanka, has attained tremendous heights in academic research and publication. The achievements of our academics and students in various local and international research sessions, stand witness to our commitments to develop new theses and contribute to national development.

The Open University Research Sessions (OURS), which is held annually in the month of November, and the International Research Conference which will be initiated in 2018, are part of our major contributions as an institution, to promote academic discourse among both local and international communities. We sincerely believe these efforts will ultimately pave the way to lead more productive and comfortable lives for all communities.

*Sameera Tilakawardana*



## **Opening Minds: Research for Sustainable Development** Open University Research Sessions 2017

The Research Sessions 2017 of the OUSL will be held on 16th and 17th November 2017 at the university premises. These Sessions are essential forums for academics and researchers, both within and outside the university, to debate and discuss their research work in progress.

This research forum has been an annual event at the university, with its history going back to 2003. Initially, the event was titled the Annual Academic Sessions of the OUSL and its intention was to promote and further strengthen the research culture of university. Over the years, however, owing to dramatic improvements in the research fields of the Open and Distance Learning, Natural Sciences, Health Sciences, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences, it was felt that this crucial research forum should be upgraded to absorb these innovations. Thus, the event is now

titled the Open University Research Sessions, or OURS, and as the title itself suggests, research per se has been granted specific focus. With the able assistance of the International Relations Unit of the OUSL, the OURS 2017 intends to contribute to identify, acknowledge, nurture and expand research activities of the country and also encourage collaborative research with global partners. The thematic of the OURS 2017 is "Opening minds: Research for Sustainable Development". OURS 2017 will feature over 100 original innovative research studies covering the disciplines of Health Sciences, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Engineering, Health and Social Sciences, Education and ODL. There is no doubt that the outcome of the OURS 2017 will open up new vistas for innovations and collaborations and help consolidate the research culture within the university.



### **OUSL Bagged both the Gold and Silver in the Best Practice Award at the AAOU 2017 Annual Conference**

A group of ten academics headed by the Vice Chancellor, Professor S. A. Ariadurai from the OUSL participated at the 31st Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU 2017) hosted by Universitas Terbuka (Indonesia Open University), on 27-29 September 2017 at the Royal Ambarrukmo Hotel, in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. "Open University for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education" was the main theme of the AAOU 2017 conference. The AAOU Annual Conference was attended by a community of academics and practitioners, administrators, students, as well as Information and Communication Technology developers and providers. It provided a Common Forum for updating the participants on ideas, issues, and the developments in the field of the ODL.

In total, ten research articles were presented by the OUSL participants at the conference. A total of six papers were short-listed for the award of the AAOU 2017 Best Practice - three were from the OUSL. More than 350 papers were presented at this conference.

Eng. W.R.de Mel and Mr. M.R. Mohamed Haroon (BTech-Mechatronics Student) of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering Technology, received the Gold Medal in "AAOU 2017 Best Practice Award". The award was granted for the research paper, "Development of a Hybrid Learning System to Enhance ODL; Printed Course Material Amelioration via Smartphones"

The silver medal for the AAOU Best Practice Award was won by Dr. Gayathri Jayatilleke, Prof. Gaya Ranawaka, Chamali Wijesekara & Malinda Kumarasinha for their paper on "Development and Testing of a Mobile application through Design-based Research". This paper was presented by Dr. Gayathri Jayatilleke Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe).

The paper was based on a design-based action research undertaken to transform existing printed lesson material into digitized content by incorporating interactive components suitable for a tablet computer. The study, funded by an OUSL research grant, enabled experimentation with novel mobile learning application, and was a joint effort between the Centre for Educational Technology and Media and Faculty of Health Sciences.

The selection criteria for the short-listed papers were based on innovative practice developed to improve process or method, the potential for such practice to be replicated or for other institution to adopt, impact on the Open Distance Learning, and the quality of writing. The Adjudication Committee appointed by the AAOU President presented their recommendations of the six finalists for further assessment of oral presentations during the Conference. At the oral presentation session, the following criteria was assessed: presentation content, organisation & flow, visual aids & posture or appearance, delivery, and the ability to answer questions. After an assessment by the Best Practice Award Adjudication Committee, the Gold Medal and two Silver Medals were presented.



Plantation Engineering, Faculty of Engineering Technology, OUSL, Ms. C. K Disanayaka - senior scientist office Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board, Ms. S. Kulathunge - former Director Gamma Centre, Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board.

### OUSL Senior Academics File a Patent Application

A team of senior academics from the OUSL and other senior scientists have filed an application for a Patent for the process of producing a cross-linked cellulose and acrylic acid grafted super absorbent copolymer using a domestic microwave oven for agricultural applications. The project team comprised of Prof. S.A Ariadurai - Department of Textile and Apparel Technology, Faculty of Engineering Technology, OUSL, Dr. A.G.B Aruggoda - Department of Agricultural and

Super Absorbent Polymers (SAPs) are structurally cross-linked, highly swollen, hydrophilic polymer networks capable of absorbing a large amount of water or aqueous saline solutions, practically 10 to 1000 times of their original weight or volume (Ramazani-Harandi et al., 2006). In the field of agriculture, one major purpose of using SAPs is to aid water sustenance and improve humidity condition of growth media. Further, SAPs are used to increase the water availability to the plant in the growth media, which would enable the plants to survive longer under water stress.



Ranasinghe (Department of Chemistry) and the post-graduate student Ms. Sachithri Munasinghe (Department of Botany). They have extensively worked on developing biotechnological methods to produce Agarwood which is a highly valuable essential oil used in perfumery and fragrance industry. The plant "Walla Patta" has been declared as a protected species under

### OUSL Files Four Patents with the NIPO

The Open University of Sri Lanka has filed four Patents at the National Intellectual Property Office (NIPO) in August 2017. Though the staff and students of the university have filed Patents in the past, this is the first time the OUSL has become an applicant to file Patents.

the Flora and Fauna Protection Ordinance (FFPO) in Sri Lanka in 2004 and internationally by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in 2005. The newly developed methods will prevent the destructive sampling of "Walla Patta" and help to conserve this endemic plant. As Agarwood oil has a high market value worldwide, these new methods can be used to produce the oil and bring foreign income to the country.

The filed Patents are concerned with sustainable utilization of endemic plant *Gyrinops walla* "Walla Patta", the only Agarwood producing species in Sri Lanka. The research team comprised of Prof. S. R. Weerakoon (Department of Botany), Dr. S. Somaratne (Department of Botany), Dr. Chandani

Researches thank Mr. Shantha Yapa of EPIC Research and Innovation Center and Ms Dilini Rathnayake, Assistant Director of NIPO who conducted a seminar on " Patent Filing and guidance for the Patent Application process."

## Vice Chancellor Visits the KIC-InnoEnergy Forum in Athens

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. S A Ariadurai, was invited by the KIC-InnoEnergy as a speaker at the KIC-InnoEnergy Forum held along with the IEEE EDUCON 2017, the global engineering education conference. The event was held in Athens, Greece on April 25, 2017. At this forum, academics and professors from various partner institutes had the opportunity to discuss and share their vision about the different challenges to education and the critical role that higher education institutions play in them, especially with reference to sustainable energy.

KIC-InnoEnergy is a European company that is dedicated for innovation, business creation and education in sustainable energy. Under one of their projects, the KIC-InnoEnergy Master's School, seven different Master's programmes are offered in partnership with twelve (12) different universities across Europe.

One of the programmes, the Master's in SELECT - Environmental Pathways for Sustainable Energy Systems (MSc SELECT), has been offered to Sri

Lankan students based on the partnership the OUSL had with one of the universities offering the programme, namely KTH: Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden. Over the last eight years or so, the OUSL facilitated the offering of the Master's programme in Sustainable Energy Engineering offered by KTH: Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden. Now this programme has been replaced with the seven programmes offered by the KIC-InnoEnergy Master's School. Based on the successful partnership KTH: Royal Institute Sweden had with the OUSL, KIC-InnoEnergy Masters School is interested in continuing the partnership to offer, initially, the Master's in SELECT - Environmental Pathways for Sustainable Energy Systems (MSc SELECT) in Sri Lanka through the OUSL.

During this visit the Vice Chancellor in addition to speaking at the KIC-InnoEnergy Forum, signed a general MoU with KIC-InnoEnergy and also held discussions with officers of the KIC-InnoEnergy and KTH: Royal Institute of Technology on the future course of actions that need to be taken to arrive at a formal agreement to offer the Master's in SELECT - Environmental Pathways for Sustainable Energy Systems (MSc SELECT) for Sri Lankan students facilitated by the OUSL.



## MOU between the OUSL and the Tamil University, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India

A general MoU was signed between the OUSL and the Tamil University, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India on 09 March 2017. This MOU will facilitate students and staff exchange programmes, joint conferences/seminars/workshops, scholarly collaborations and supporting educational, professional and cultural activities among faculties and students of the two institutions. The Tamil University is a prestigious university for the study of the Tamil Language. As a result of fruitful discussions

the two universities hope to launch a collaborative B.A in Tamil Language at the Open University. Mrs. Kala Chandramohan from the Department of Language Studies facilitated this visit.

## More opportunities with other South Indian Universities

The Vice Chancellor of the OUSL Prof. S.A. Ariadurai was also invited to several other universities in Tamil Nadu. The Periyar University in Salem, Mother Teresa Women's University in Kodaikanal, The University of Chennai and The Vellore Institute of Technology (VTI) and their Chennai Campus.

Of this the VTI Campus offered their help to write course material for the B.A (Hons) in Library Sciences which will be launched in 2018. This will be facilitated by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences together with the Library of the OUSL. The entry point to this degree will be from the Level 5.



### **Unveiling the photograph of Prof. Camena Guneratne - former Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

The photograph of Prof. Camena Guneratne was unveiled in the Faculty Board Room of the Faculty of HSS on 19th April 2017. She is Professor in the Department of Legal Studies and has served the OUSL for more than twenty five years. She made significant contributions to the Faculty of HSS as their Dean from 05th October 2013 to 04th October 2016. Prof. S A. Ariadurai, the Vice Chancellor of the OUSL, Dr. Shantha Abeysinghe, the present Dean of the Faculty of HSS, Deans of the other faculties, academic staff and administrative staff of the OUSL attended the ceremony to unveil her photograph.



'A Collection of Research Publications of Prof. K. S. Weerasekera (1992 – 2017)' is a compilation of research-related outcomes of Prof. Weerasekera published as monographs, journal articles, research papers presented at various international and local conferences over a period of 25 years. Work presented here is mainly on transport and traffic engineering discipline which is Prof. Weerasekera's area of specialization, and some work on Distance Learning as well.

'A Collection of Newspaper & Newsletter Articles of Dr. K. S. Weerasekera' is a collection of articles written by Dr. Weerasekera on issues prevalent in the country in the transport industry. They were published as newspaper and newsletter articles during 1998.

### **National Seminar on Current Issues of Education**

The Department of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Faculty of Education, OUSL organized a National Seminar on Current Issues in Education on behalf of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education (SLAAED) on 23rd March 2017. The event was held at the seminar room of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The following were the distinguished invitees:

Prof. G.D. Lekamge, Senior Professor – President of SLAAED

Dr. F.M. Nawastheen, Senior Lecturer – Secretary of SLAAED

Dr. S.M. Wanasinghe, Senior Lecturer- Council Member of SLAAED

Rasika Nawaratne, Senior Lecturer- Council Member of SLAAED

Five speakers notable in their respective fields presented their views on four selected themes: Dr. Harsha Aturupane, Lead Education Specialist to the World Bank; Dr. Upali Sedere, Rector, Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy; Dr. Raja Gunawardena, Former Dean/ Faculty of Education OUSL ; Prof. Marie Perera, Director /National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) and, R. S. Medagama, Former Additional Director General, Educational Reforms, Ministry of Education .

In addition, Emeritus Prof. Chandra Gunawardena, Dr. I.L. Ginige, Mrs. Jezima Ismail and Prof. T. Thanaraj participated in the discussions that followed.

## **OUSL at the PRO- FOOD PACK Agri- BIZ 2017**

The Department of Agricultural and Plantation Engineering showcased ten products that were produced by students and faculty members at the Pro Food Pack Agri Biz 2017 this month. The main theme of the stall was "Organic farming, Sustainability and Longevity". There was an enthusiastic crowd who visited the stall as well as those who were interested in further collaboration with and development of our products. The Exhibition was held from the 4th to 6th August at the BMICH. The participation at this exhibition was initiated by Dr. Nimsha Weerakody Head of the Department of Agricultural & Plantation Engineering. The Public Information Division of the OUSL, also publicized these programmes and coordinated the publicity material, stall design and logistics.

Further, two products, the Electronic Nose and the Natural Safe Anti – Bio Film Spray, were selected for another exhibition the Comic Con Exhibition, on 26th and 27th of September 2017.

The following products were evaluated by a panel of eminent judges, the results will be realised early next year.

1. Natural Safe Anti – Bio Fil Spray – spice and flavoring agent with the use of Galangal
2. Electronic Nose – this machine can detect whether meat is in healthy condition by detecting evolving gases
3. Flavored Tea Cube – instant thirst quencher
4. Breakfast Cup – is a nutritious pre-prepared ready to eat meal consisting of Rice flakes, milk, yoghurt, carrots, beet and dried fruit
5. Bambusa Plates- - made from bamboo sheaths this is an alternative to synthetic foam and plastic products
6. Nutrient Bar – ideal for school children and office workers as it provides instant energy, the product is made from rice flakes, popcorn, cereals, legumes, peanuts, bees honey, dehydrated fruits and moringa leaves
7. Cottella spread – a spread that has a good source of fatty acids made of our original Kottamba seeds
8. High Fiber Veg-ball – a good source of dietary fiber made out of kohila, help to control diabetes, cholesterol and disorders in the intestine
9. Live straw – a straw that detects high levels of chlorinated water
10. Natural Colorant – a natural colorant from the red kottamba fruit pulp useful as a coloring agent



## **A new diagnostic lab graces the portals of the Open University**

With the view of providing quality laboratory services to the staff, students and their families of the OUSL, the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences (MLS) , Faculty of Health Sciences, opened the doors to a Diagnostic Laboratory in the presence of the Vice Chancellor on 19th April 2017.

The non-profit but service oriented laboratory offers concessional prices for all laboratory services and collaborates with the diagnostic laboratory of the Lanka Hospitals. All tests not performed in-house will be transferred to Lanka Hospitals which hosts one of the few standardized laboratories in the country with the ISO 15189 accreditation.

The Department of MLS is hoping to extend these services to the general public in the near future. Qualified medical laboratory scientists registered with the Sri Lanka Medical Council operate the laboratory at the OUSL.

The sample collection center of the Diagnostic Laboratory is located on the first floor of Block 4. Laboratory is open on Monday to Friday, except on public holidays from 8:30 am – 10:30 am.

## **World Health Day at the OUSL**

The Department of Psychology and Counselling of the Faculty of Health Sciences organized a day-long programme in lieu of the World Health Day which is annually commemorated on the 7th of April. Based on the theme set by the World Health Organization (WHO) for 2017 "Depression: Let's Talk", the department with the assistance of the Faculty of Health Sciences, aimed to raise awareness about depression in Sri Lanka amongst the university community. Depression, according to studies is a health risk, with one in every four people affected. The programme provided a kaleidoscopic view of the prevalence of depression and offered ways to improve mental health.

A number of stalls were on display to create awareness. The Counsellors' Corner managed by the OUSL Counselling Unit provided an opportunity

for students and staff to appreciate mental health services available at the OUSL and to discuss related issues. Help Age Sri Lanka's greeting cards stall served to highlight and gain support for the elderly: a group at risk from depression. The Occupational Therapy Unit of the National Institute for Mental Health hosted a stall of products featuring bags, purses, rugs, necklaces and cards created by in-house patients. In addition to these, a food stall by Hela Bojun, an extension of the Department of Agriculture, provided authentic Sri Lankan food specially selected to help boost the emotional state of a person whilst the adjoining information desk reported on the biochemical processes involved.

The highlight of the event was the screening of a short narrative documentary titled "Silent Echo" which captured the experiences of true stories of depression in Sri Lanka. The documentary directed by Ishara Danasekara, a freelance film maker, was created especially for the programme. The event concluded with a workshop on "Mindfulness Based Practices for Better Mental Health" conducted by the renowned counsellor, Rekha Attidiye. This event was funded by the WHO-Sri Lankan Country Office and Sadhani Rajapakse, a Clinical Psychologist and Emergency Disaster Officer for the WHO.

### OUSL Badminton Team Shines

OUSL Badminton team took part in the 'SLIIT Shuttle Buds 2017' Badminton Championship which was organized by the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT). The Championship was held from 16th to 17th July 2017 at the SLIIT University indoor Gymnasium.

over 60 Participants from 10 universities. The OUSL team featured seven undergraduates representing three faculties: Natural Sciences, Engineering Technology and Humanities and Social Sciences Participants: Uparna Katuwawala (Captain), Chathuri Fernando, Sandunika Petronilda, Chamya Nandasiri, Uvidi Jayasinghe, Savidu Jayasinghe, Sandali Perera

The OUSL team won the championship trophy in the women's event defeating the team from the National School of Business Management (NSBM). The third place was won by the team SLIIT. The tournament involved the participation



*From left to right-  
1st row (standing): Chamya Nandasiri, Chathuri Fernando, Sandali Perera, Uvidi Jayasinghe, Uparna Katuwawala (Captain), Savidu Jayasinghe, Sandunika Petronilda*

*2nd row (seated): H.A.A.I Hettiarachchi (Senior Assistant Registrar), Mr.K.P.J.M.Pathirana (Senior Lecturer)-Teacher in charge Badminton*



### Success for the OUSL Rugby Team

OUSL Rugby team took part in the 'MORA 7'S' Rugby tournament which was organized by the University of Moratuwa. The Tournament was held on 21st December 2016 at the Airforce grounds Ratmalana. The OUSL team won 2nd place of the bowl championship.

1st place went to Colombo International Nautical and Engineering College (CINEC).

The tournament involved over 144 Participants from 12 universities. The OUSL team comprised of 11 undergraduates representing all Faculties.



Participants - Amitha Siriwardane, Tharindu Dhananjana, Randika Weerasekara, Dilshan Gunathilaka, Dilshan Pavithra, Dinesh Liyanage, Sameera Weerasinghe, Kavinda Karunathilake, Sanjeewa Ransinghe, Tharindu Madubhathiya, Sanjaya Jayasundara, Hirantha Athulathmudali

### Public Information Division at EDEX Mid-Year Expo 2017

The PID took part in the largest mid year educational exhibition hosted by EDEX on 02nd and 03rd of September 2017. The exhibition was patronized by a large number of potential undergraduate, professionals and parents. At least thousand students visited the Open University stall. A six member team together with student volunteers participated at this exhibition.

The stall mainly featured the undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered by the OUSL. One unique feature was the special lighting system that was designed and fixed by the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department of the OUSL.



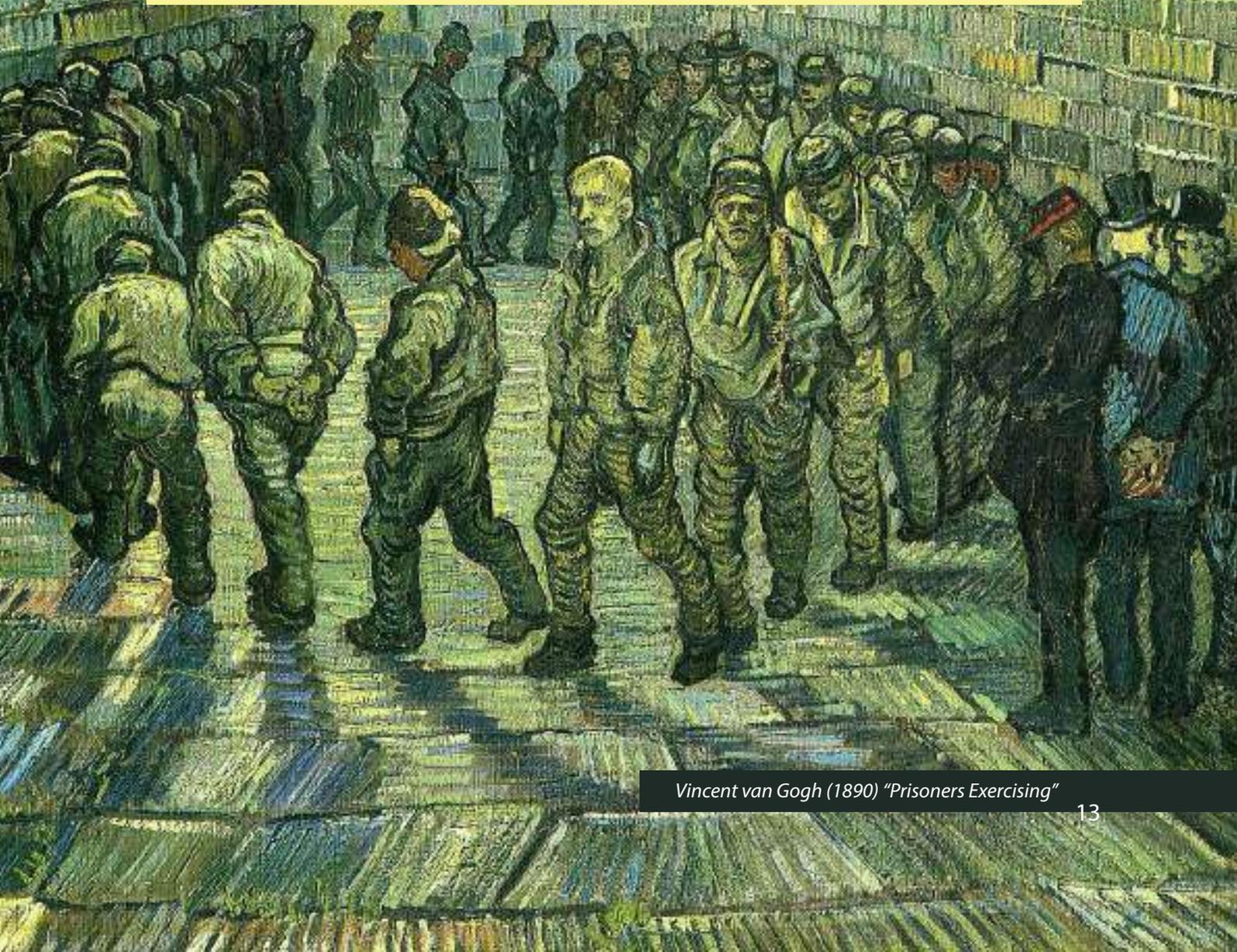
# THE DUAL IMPORTANCE OF TRADE UNIONS: A DEFENDER OF WORKERS AND AN AGENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

In June 2016, the management of Smart Shirts Ltd. a factory located in the Katunayaka Free Trade Zone dismissed twelve of its workers. The reason for this dismissal was not any misconduct in the part of workmen or any incapacity demonstrated in performing their duties. The dismissed were some young activists who attempted to form a trade union in the factory. They sought to unionize as they felt working conditions in the factory were appalling and their power to bargain with the management on these conditions might improve if all the workers make representations together, as a union.

The dismissal of Smart Shirt workers is yet another example for widespread anti-union discrimination happening in our workplaces regularly. In contemporary times, the term 'trade unions' itself connotes a negative tone in many quarters, not only in forums of employers, but

also in commentaries of mainstream economists describing the existence of trade unions as a factor preventing the attraction of foreign investment and expansion of economic growth. Within this hostile discourse, trade unions are depicted as a hindrance to 'industrial harmony'. Employers warning newly recruited workers against joining or forming trade unions is a common occurrence in workplaces. Instead, they are encouraged to sought answers for their grievances on an individual basis; for instance, through correspondence with the Human Resources officers.

This hostile view of trade unions underpinned by short term economic interests undermines the role of trade unions in work relations. It is important to keep in mind that we discuss the importance and significance of trade unions not in a vacuum but in a context in which such a discourse has dominantly emerged.



Vincent van Gogh (1890) "Prisoners Exercising"

## **Hierarchical nature of work relations**

To understand the significance of trade unions, we have to first identify the precise character of employment relations of the modern times. The modern employment contract is a hierarchical relationship between two parties having an unequal standing. On the one hand, you have the 'boss'; the owner of the workplace. This boss may be a large corporation which have delegated managerial power to control a large number of workers or alternatively can be a small shop holder hiring a handful of workers. No matter whether large or small, in the context of work relations the employer rules. This power to rule simply derives from the fact that he is the 'owner' of the enterprise. The worker will get the job only if the boss agrees to hire him and in the process of hiring, the employer to a large extent sets the terms and conditions of work. The worker of course has the 'freedom' to refuse these terms but at the expense of not being recruited!

Thus, from its very inception the contract of employment acquires a hierarchical form. Employer 'controls' the worker and worker is expected to obey orders. However, this results in complications as competing interests are inscribed in the employment relationship itself. The employer is interested in maximizing his profits and approaches the issue of labour with this objective. From the employers' standpoint labour is a 'cost' affecting his profits. On the other hand, worker expects a decent pay, right to obtain leave when it is necessary, employment security, maternity benefits and so forth which will make labour costly to the employer. If the workers in a workplace do not exercise any bargaining power to counter the authority of the employer the latter shall freely impose his will over the workers.

In fact, this was the scenario that prevailed in the modern capitalist societies prior to the emergence of trade unions and social legislation protecting workers' interests. For instance, working life in western industrial societies before the 19th century was defined with low wages, absolute poverty, social degradation and virtual absence of human dignity. The employer was entitled to dismiss the worker at his will just by giving a short prior notice. There were no restrictions for the work day and workers sometimes were compelled to work twelve or fourteen hours a day. Children and women were employed under insecure conditions. In this context, labour was essentially precarious and was strangled with a sense of constant insecurity.

## **History of trade unions and 'labour standards'**

We all know that this is not the norm today. Its true that working conditions of the Victorian era Britain still prevails in some parts of the world for a more or less extent, especially in the global south. A close look at the working conditions in the Export Processing Zones around South and South East Asia will provide ample evidence in this regard. However, degradation of the worker is not an accepted norm today; at least in the formal sense. Such scenarios entailing appalling working conditions are considered as excesses and as inconsistent with universally recognized labour standards.

Thus how these 'universal labour standards' such as the eight-hour work day were materialized? One may tend to attribute its materialization to the functioning of state legislations or international bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO). However, a more historical survey will show us that the realization of labour rights which were later articulated in the language of 'labour standards' primarily stems from the premise of organized pressure of workers. And trade unions are the traditional and the most fundamental form of workers' organizations. Trade Unions are voluntary bodies based at the grass root level providing a space for workers to collectively forward their concerns and demands.

The history of trade unionism is a history of battle against power and vested interests of the economic elite. For example, in Britain where trade unionism first emerged as a powerful force of workers' liberation and social change, they were first considered as illegal organizations violating the common law arrangement between the master and servant based on individual contractual obligations. Therefore, trade union activists were prosecuted and any strike action was treated with hostility by the law. One has to recall that May 1st, which is celebrated as the international workers' day, was named following the so called 'Haymarket massacre' in which striking workers in the Haymarket Square of Chicago were dispersed by the Police by force and court imposing death sentence on seven trade union leaders. One of the demands of those workers who were hanged by the state back in 1886 was an eight hour working day, which is an internationally accepted basic principle as per present standards! At that time these leaders were labeled as dangerous radicals for raising this slogan.

In spite of the repression, trade unions continued to grow and emerged as a social actor which governments could not overlook. Some trade unions formed their own political parties in the nature of the Labour Party of Britain and some retained strong links with parties representing the interests of working population. This politicization radically altered the balance of power not only in the workplace and but also in the government, enabling enactments of labour protective legislations restricting the managerial prerogative of the employer.

Therefore, it is vital to highlight that collective action of workers precedes protective state legislations and later manifestations of the ILO ; not vice versa. It was the collective pressure of the workers movements across the world that made the recognition of labour rights a possibility. Thus , it is important to remember that labour rights or standards did not appear from the scratch but emerged and consolidated largely due to the organized power of labour. In this sense, trade unions constitute a democratic and for a large extent an emancipatory force in a society, representing interests and aspirations of the working masses who are entangled in a condition of structural inequality.

### **The dual significance of trade unions**

Here we can relate this discussion to our original question: what is the importance of trade unions in contemporary times? I would base my case for the continuous importance of trade unions on two substantial factors.

First, trade unions are essential in ensuring a dignified life to the worker. At the workplace level, it creates a counter balance to the employer's prerogative and acts remedially towards balancing the structural inequality of bargaining power between the employer and employee through empowering workers to bargain collectively on their working conditions. In other words, collective organization of workers is the fundamental premise from which collective bargaining emerge. Collective bargaining enables workers to bargain for their salaries, bonuses, leave and so forth and averts a worker being treated as a mere 'factor of production' by the employer. The opening phrase of the Philadelphia declaration (1944) which proclaimed the objectives of the ILO states that 'labour is not a commodity' and envisions a broader conception of labour; i.e. understanding labour as a human entity and recognizing the necessity to treat it with human dignity. State legislations for a large extent provides a platform of rights for the

worker to live a dignified life but even to make state machinery effective, for example through making representation. it is important for workers to be organized and unionized.

Second, in a broader sense, trade unions function as an instrument for social justice and democracy by intervening in the process of redistribution. For instance, collective bargaining functions as a process of redistributing wealth from the axis of capital to labour. This happens both in the individual enterprise level as well as in sectorial levels since collective agreements can be reached covering an entire sector of production. For example, a collective bargaining agreement covering the plantation industry enables redistribution of profit in the form of wages for workers in the whole industry if workers can win a wage increase in the process of collective bargaining.

Further, as evident from experiences of other countries as well as the history of Sri Lanka as organizations representing a bulk of masses trade unions are potent in functioning as agents of progressive social change and resistance. To cite an example from contemporary Europe, in countries which were hard hit by the financial crisis and were hampered with severe austerity measures trade unions function as a leading force resisting the dismantling of public services, imposing cuts on welfare provisions and so forth. Further, in countries such as Britain they currently play a progressive role by advocating redistributive issues such as expansion of universal free health-care provisions and introduction of free education.

This dual model enables us to recognize the importance of trade unions both in micro (enterprise) and macro levels. If we are to envisage the idea of development on a broader perspective which entails values of social justice and democracy, recognizing collective organization of workers as integral to such an endeavor is essential. And it is precisely on this ground that the reductionist view of labour unions as an obstacle to development has to be challenged and confronted.

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Department of Legal Studies*



## RETHINKING ‘KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY’ IN THE ABSENCE OF FREE EDUCATION?

*“Human capital, embodied in one’s people, is the most fundamental part of the wealth of nations.”*

*Claudia Dale Goldin, Lawrence F. Katz*

Knowledge drives the human society forward. Historically and socially accumulated knowledge does not belong to a single entity or person but remains a collective social enterprise. Knowledge in the form of education, we believe, should mainly be produced and disseminated for the progress of humankind, and the universities were established for that historical task. Therefore, the idea of an emergent knowledge society may be viewed primarily as a resuscitation of a long established social contract, namely, that knowledge be

used for social progress. Equitable access to knowledge, therefore, one can suggest, should be recognized as a human right (see Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Accordingly, knowledge can continue its civilizational role of liberating human kind from all its miseries, economic, social, cultural, political etc. Education is for the “full development of the human personality and to the strengthened of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Art 26 -2: UDHR).

Yet, the discourse of knowledge societies today in the context of neo-liberal governance is clearly transcending the historical and universally accepted meaning, role, objectives of education and its societal dimension and agency. State today is no longer willing to be responsible for producing education. Therefore, the universities are no longer the 'eyes of the nation', in a Derridean sense, but mere institutions being driven with profit motives to produce technologically equipped labor force to serve global capitalism. Another paradox may be that while advanced technologies such as the Internet has brought much optimism for open public access to knowledge on an unrestricted terrain, the neo-liberal onslaught on free education and welfare state indicates that knowledge enterprise is redesigned as a vehicle for capital accumulation; hence, knowledge industry, not the so-called 'society', is one of the most profitable businesses producing education as a commodity. The path of human civilization and its progressive development thus remains hugely doubtful, since in a market place what matters is not meritocracy or level of IQ but purchasing power of consumers. Isn't this a condition equal to the archaic Brahmanical view of social order? One can call it a neo-feudalist or neo-Brahmanical order because one's right to education is only a matter of its financial ability, same as your caste marked place and position in feudal society. The solution to the issue of equitable access due to commercialization of education cannot be the provision of educational loans as such because the rationale for the provision of such 'commodified knowledge' as education is not clearly aimed at promoting democratic citizenship but enabling unhindered exploitation and consumer capitalism.

Commercialization and privatization of education has multiple consequences. Foremost of it is its impact on liberal arts education. Just go through the local paper advertisements promoting non-state universities currently; they all offer courses in the fields of IT, Event Management, Interior Designing, Commerce and Management, Tourism, Engineering and Medicine only. But, can such education create a full development of human being without liberal arts? Not only liberal arts one can also see that even pure sciences are under threat today. In Sri Lankan state universities, it is found that annually there are over 2700 student vacancies which remain unfilled particularly for science subjects. This may be because of the attitude promoted about science education like liberal arts as being unable to create employment if it is not coupled with technical and indus-

trial education which can be produced by technical colleges. But, the real danger facing the University is that the very term 'University' is being exploited to promote technical education institutes as Universities while state universities are left to suffer and collapse, as entities that do not create so-called employable graduates. Therefore, the neo-liberal project is a politically motivated project to attack the philosophical idea and role of the University, and instead to serve capitalism's endless drive to accumulate and expand on a global scale.

Universities or its management, as Martha Nussbaum laments, no longer think that liberal arts or pure sciences should be taught but only courses which can generate profits such as technology, medicine or engineering. This condition of knowledge being interpreted and produced only as a tool for capital accumulation and producing a submissive work force lacking critical thinking is not at all a progress of human civilization but a clear retreat and decline of democratic society. What fundamentally is threatened by commercialization of education, on the other hand, is the idea of democratic citizenship and hence, the fear of the rise of authoritarianism in every aspect of social life, threatening social justice and social equity.

How do we assess the current debate on education in Sri Lanka in this context? It is clear that free education has been part and parcel of human development in the post-independence period of Sri Lanka. Federation of University Teachers' Association (FUTA) together with a large people's movement attempted to generate discourse on 'education as a right but not a commodity.' It is very clear that the current phase of education reforms in Sri Lanka is being driven with one clear goal, i.e., to minimize or abolish the role of the state in education. There is evidence in abundance to prove this proposition; to mention but a few of them would include the continuous reduction of government expenditure on education for the last two decades (currently less than 1.4% of GDP), the attempt to establish private universities such as the highly controversial SAITM (South Asian Institute of Technology and Management) despite a huge public outcry, the proposal of the Ministry of Higher Education to provide loans for A/L qualified students to enter non-state universities, establishment of institutions such as SLIIT, NSMB (Green University), KDU (all these institutions charge money for admission but are not coming under the direct purview of the UGC) and the proposed loan scheme for A/L qualified

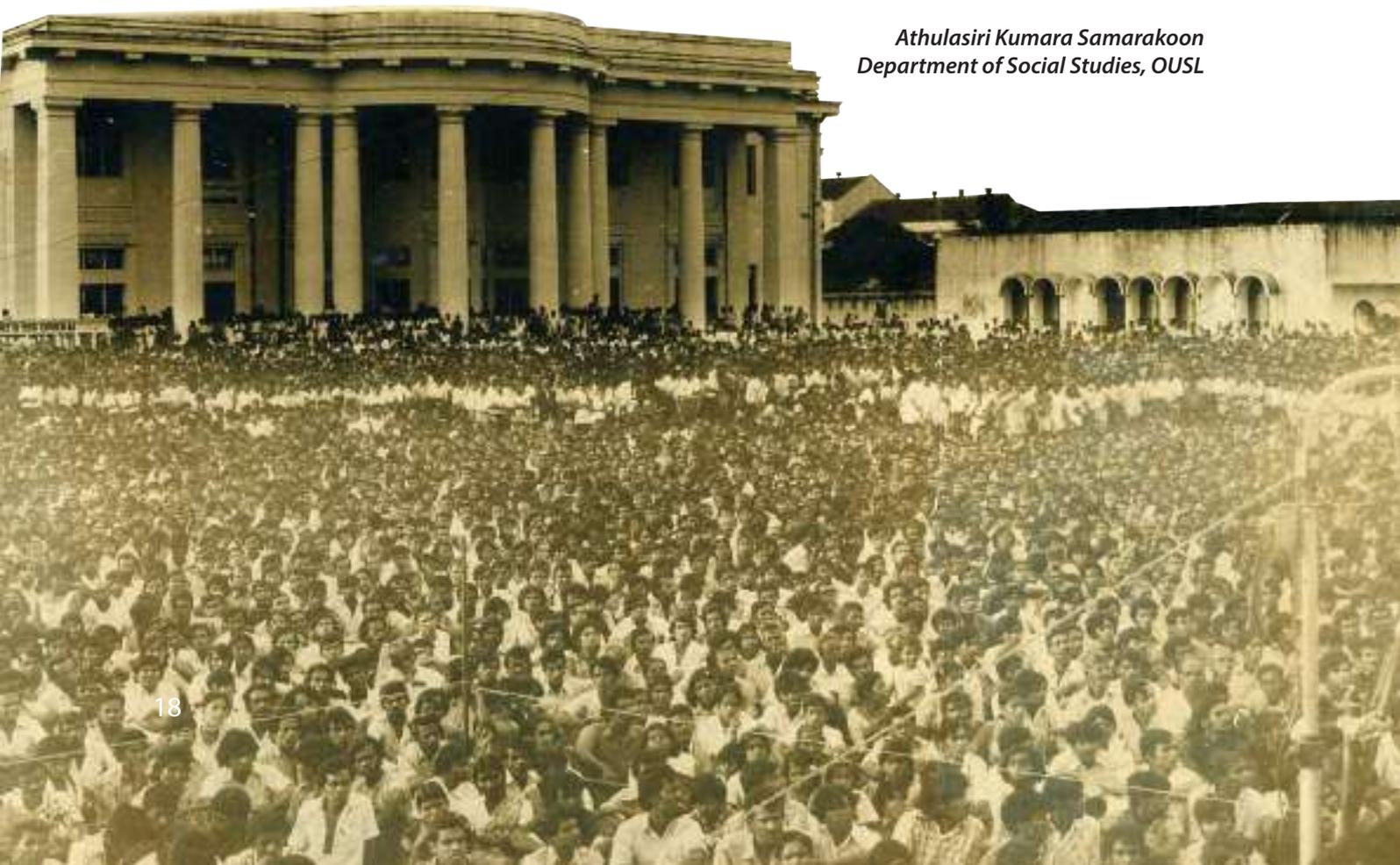
students to study B.Ed. Degree in non-state universities. These are some well-known and clear evidences to establish the fact that the government policy today is upturned regarding free education. Instead it attempts very hard to convince the general public that to pay for education should be the new norm and more than that 'free education for all' is no longer the viable option for the state.

The post-independence history of Sri Lanka witnessed that its people achieve a considerable human development due to the provision of free education and free health in the main. More than that free education has been the major means to promote democratic citizenship. Children of this country begin to imagine as belonging to one nation primarily through education because they read the same text books and sit for same examinations and enter higher education institutes through a common test. People have for long trusted this system of free education and it remains so strong with more than 10,000 schools with 45 lakhs of student population, and 15 universities that admit nearly 23,000 students, apart from institutions such the OUSL which is also an extension of free education to the people left behind by the mainstream system. It is therefore clear that free education is a major means through which this country to creates its future, its national wealth, human capital.

The current moment of economic reforms somehow point toward a grave crisis in the system of education, particularly free education. The government argues that Sri Lanka's higher education system requires to be privatized since the current state-sponsored system only absorbs 18% of the A/L qualified students in to the state universities. Also, another major issue that the people who argue for privatization point out is that the state universities do not think of "employability" of the graduates. Everywhere the term 'employability' is heard as if the historical role of education as the major means of creating a socially sensitive democratic citizenship is no longer the goal of education. Therefore, the government today thinks that the primary task of higher education is to create an employable graduate. Though this argument is quite plausible its hidden meaning needs to deconstruct to reveal the danger behind such shortsighted goals for education.

Today, the state is facing a decisive challenge from global capitalism to completely do away with the free education system historically established though mass struggle. Though we are mostly divided on what future could bring to us, we all have to launch a united battle in safeguarding the democratic system of the state first, and then the demand for an uninterrupted access to free education as a right. It is a battle for safeguarding the very foundation of the nation state called Sri Lanka.

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# A VOICE OF UNIFICATION

When the OPEN Quarterly made discrete inquiries as to the workings of trade unions we were unanimously directed to Mr. H. M. Wijithasena. The 36 long, but happy, years spent as an employee of the OUSL had convinced Mr. Wijithasena of the need to know every nook and corner of the University.

To engage in a conversation with Mr.

Wijithasena is to look at the history of the University from a different perspective. "The OUSL was

began on 22nd of July 1980," he

began with a nostalgic look in

his eye. "At that time we were

under the University of

Colombo," and the OUSL

premises was at the Mara-

dana Technical College.

The very next year

(1981), Mr.

Wijithasena joined

the OUSL staff as a

technician.

However, it was not

until 1989, that he

was called to fight

for worker rights. "The

first strike was in 1989

and it was very successful.

There were about 14 to 15

demands mostly because our

benefits were much lower than that of

government employees. The demands

included the warrant system on trains

which we were not entitled to, our

salary schemes and we also started discussions

into the pension scheme," he recalled.

Those were evidently very exciting times for the

Trade Union under the banner of the University of

Colombo during the riots of the 1980's. "We signed

the final agreement at 12: 10 AM," recalled Mr.

Wijithasena, thinking of the countless discussions

that had always ended past midnight. "I was

staying in Nugegoda at that time, and I still

remember Professor Jayantha Wijesekera, the then

VC of the OUSL, came to my lodge at around 1:00

AM to ask if I had returned safely."

**Trade Unions are not everyone's cup of tea. There is a very thin line between a hero and villain in Trade Union Culture. Nonetheless, they are a necessary part of a democratic establishment in providing a voice for the workers. Here at the OUSL there is a hierarchy of trade unions, representing the diversity of skills and professionalism needed for the operation of an organization of this magnitude.**

Mr. Wijithasena has always made it a point to maintain cordial relationships with the administration.

**“I strongly believe that no matter what kind of organization you are a member of, your first priority must always be to respect and protect the University.”**

Discussions are his preferred means of resolving problems. Four sections must operate for the smooth functioning of a university, explained Mr. Wijithasena: the administration, non-academic staff, academic staff and students. “Therefore, it is important for everyone to meet on a common platform and work together.”

Many have been the occasions when student unions and academic unions were supported by the non-academics’ trade union to win demands. During each situation the Union first verified the demands against the legislature before stepping in. “If the demands are reasonable we have been present to persuade the administration to give into those demands.”

There have also been occasions when the Union had to work against the student union said Mr. Wijithasena recalling the most recent incident when the students caused havoc by destroying University property during their strike. “The non-academics trade union opposed the students on that occasion as they didn’t listen to our pleas, they refused to negotiate and in the end the University was being destroyed. We couldn’t stand by and watch this happen,” spoke up Mr. Wijithasena remembering the tension as if it was only yesterday. He explained that the University is the primary focus as, “if the university had to close, we would all be on the road.”

During another long-term strike, when the University was closed as a result, the Union had asked the security service to support their cause. In order to protect the University, the security personnel were asked to perform their duties, in civil clothes. “We will never allow the University to face a danger and so we took turns helping the security staff to guard the University 24 hours of the day,” recalled Mr. Wijithasena.

As the Deputy chairman of the Union, Mr. Wijithasena has always maintained integrity, commanded loyalty and respect that is envied by others. “The most important characteristic of the

president of a trade union is to have the University’s best interest at heart,” reiterated Mr. Wijithasena. Another characteristic important of a leader is the ability to negotiate. “You have to be prepared to walk away with 50% of your demands at times.” With retirement on the horizon, Mr. Wijithasena has been taking steps to groom the future generations in these simple yet vital doctrines of Trade Union functions. “You must know the legislature under which Trade Unions were legalized under the Labour Law, you must know the Universities Act and the various amendments so that your demands at all times can be reasonable, you must also be ready to accept demands which the University can reasonably match.”

Union representatives speak to the VC twice a month to voice concerns. “We have resolved many problems through these discussions”. Mr. Wijithasena attributes most of his successes to these discussions where he balanced the welfare of the University with that of its employees.

**“Rather than focusing on what we win today, which could be lost in a month you have to focus on demands that will benefit you for the next 20 years. This is why sometimes rather than trying to accomplish a 100% win of your demands it is more prudent to accept 50% of the demands.”**

Of course at times the activities of the University have had to be disrupted for the cause. This is a necessity, he explained, because if the University was allowed to function the authorities ignore the strike action.

Mr. Wijithasena is concerned about the reluctance of present employees to join a trade union. “I doubt they would come even if the VC invites them,” laughed Mr. Wijithasena. His parting advice is for employees to join a trade union as a union is the only place that will fight for their benefits.

*Kshanika Goonesekera  
Sameera Tilakawardana*

## Sri Lankan Symbol of International Law - An Appreciation of Judge late C.G. Weeramantry

I am not sure how to begin the story of a great person when every step of his life journey is so important, precious and glorious. This humble person has many biographies, articles and some documentaries dedicated to him. He is none other than the late Professor C.G Weeramantry. The 'trustees' of the trusteeship workshop of the Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Studies and Research (WICPER) used to call him 'Judge'. I too was a 'trustee', thus I will continue to use that name, with all respect and love from my heart.

Judge was a former vice-president of International Court of Justice(ICJ) at The Hague in The Netherlands and Emeritus Professor of Law of the Monash University of Australia. Before starting at Monash, he was a Supreme Court judge of Sri Lanka. It will take another two to three pages to list the positions held by Judge in various forums.

I still remember the first that day I met this passionate person. Judge graced the inauguration ceremony of the Training for Trusteeship Workshop held in Kegalle in 2011. I was curious to see this noble person and I shared this enthusiasm with all the young participants from the South Asian countries. He started his speech with a pleasant smile. We marveled at his clarity of speech, inspirational thoughts and the way he shared his ideas with us. That day, we realised why the world recognizes, Judge as a reservoir of wisdom.

He spoke on the concept of trusteeship by taking examples from various religions, cultures and traditions. I had never thought of the connection between religion and law before I met Judge. He explained that the law is not something sticking to black letters on white. He stressed that the law should be something that has connections with all aspects of human life. Judge emphasised that the present generation is only a custodian of the earth and natural resources and not an owner of it. Then he pointed out the bounden duty of humankind



to protect nature for the benefit of generations yet to be born. That was the idea of the message of trusteeship he tried to establish in various international forums and in his writings.

Judge was quite famous at the International Court of Justice for his dissenting judgments. Most of the time he upheld minority views that were strongly based on humanity, sustainable development, peace and the rights of future generations. The international community highly respects his dissenting judgments over those of the majority of judges. In the Hungary v. Slovakia dissenting opinion in 1997, Judge emphasised the ancient wisdom of the Sinhalese with examples of the irrigation system of the historical city of Anuradhapura. Interestingly, he quoted the Mahawamsa on the advice of Arahath Mahinda to King Devanampiyatissa (247-207 BC) that the ruler of the country is only a guardian of the natural resources which are for the benefit of present and future generations. He extracted the ancient wisdom of humankind and contributed to exporting it into the arena of international policy making. He also rejected the myths relating to the western origins of modern concepts such as sustainable development, human rights and humanity. He clearly indicated that each of these concepts have their roots in ancient civilizations and the wisdom of most third world countries.

However, some countries were not happy with his views on sustainability and the threat of nuclear weapons. Especially in the 'Advisory Opinion of Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons' in 1996, he opined that 'the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal in any circumstances whatsoever and it causes to violate the fundamental principles of international law'. When Judge returned to Sri Lanka in 2001 after completing ten years of service at the ICJ from 1991 to 2000 he started WICPER to disseminate his views on peace education and research.

Fortunately, I was nominated as a participant of the 'Training for Trusteeship' programme and was greatly inspired by Judge's vision. That is my story of being a 'trustee'.

Another important quality Judge had was his respect of all religions. He believed that all religions have one noble truth although rituals and practices and preaching differ. In the workshop each group was assigned a task with the Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita, Bible and Quran. We had to select one noble scripture that did not belong to our religion and read it and come up with a motivational thought and share it with the other groups every morning. I had the opportunity to read the Bhagavad Gita, Bible and Quran and understand the similarities of the messages contained in every religion. I used to keep copies of all four scriptures with me and read them again and again to enhance my cross-cultural understanding. Judge also guided us in being grateful to Mother Nature that we are all part of. During the workshop, every morning of my life began with being grateful to the environment for giving me fresh air to live. Therefore, I am very proud of being a trustee.

With the dawn of 2017, on 5 January we were shocked to hear of the demise of our beloved Judge at the age of ninety. He had dedicated the long journey of his life for the betterment of international law and justice. He was such a humble jurist, scholar and proud son of mother Lanka. He was the Sri Lankan symbol of international law. Although the crown jewel of the Sri Lankan legal paternity is now lost to us, Judge gave wings to our thoughts that neither recognizes borders nor stagnates with selfish desires.

This note is in the name of that eminent jurist of our time.

*Sanath Sameera Wijesinghe  
Department of Legal Studies*



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## Difference.

“Let’s buy it later”  
“May be next time”  
“Oh that’s not nice, let’s try another” .....

Hope you remember my son,  
Frequent words I uttered  
During our shopping tours  
Those days.....  
When you were a kid

“Do you like it mom?”  
“Why don’t you try this?”  
“This looks quite nice for you”

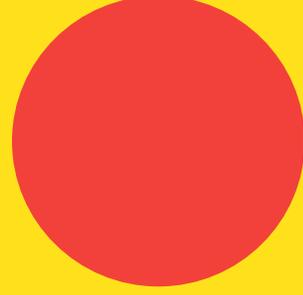
You ask me today  
As a rich man my son  
Taking me around  
Mega malls abroad

I feel embarrassed  
Going back in the memory lane ....

But why should I?  
Isn’t it my hard earned money,  
And your hard work  
That brought you here

Shouldn’t I be the proud mother?

~ NandaniHerath ~



## கற்றதும் உற்றதும்

பாலர் பள்ளிதனில் பண்புகள் பலபயின்று  
பல்கலைசென்றபின்பும் செழுமைமிகு  
மனிதம் தன்னைஉயர்த்திட வழி பயின்றோம்

ஓதாமல் இருக்காதிருக்கபொல்லாங்குபிறரைச்  
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உணவில்லையெனில் ஜகத்தினைஅழிக்கச் சொன்ன  
பாரதியின் பாட்டுதனைபக்குவமாய் எடுத்துரைத்து  
சமத்துவமற்ற ஜகத்துக்குச் சமாதிகட்டச் சொன்னார்.....

வரலாற்றுஆசானும் கூடசகிப்புத்தன்மைசந்தமும்வளர்ந்திடவே  
சங்கதிகள் பலசொல்ல -புவியியல் ஆசானும் கூட  
மரம் வளர்ப்போம் உயிர்பெறுவோம்என்றிசைத்தார்.....  
எல்லாம் தான் பள்ளியில் நாம் பயின்றோம்.....  
ஏட்டினில் படித்துஓட்டையாய் ஆனதுவே.....!  
என்னேமனிதரிவர்.....?

தான் வாழ்ந்தால் போதுமென்றுதரணியையேதவிக்கவிட்டார்  
ஏட்டிக்குப் போட்டியாகஏலச்சந்தையிலே  
மானம் தன்னை.....மனிதம் தன்னை.....பாசம் தன்னை.....  
பண்புதனைபறக்கவிட்டார்  
புத்தனும் காந்தியும் யேசுவும் உரைத்தஉரை  
நிர்மலமாய் போனதுவேநீதியதுவீழ்ந்ததுவே.....  
தக்கதுதான்பிழைக்கதருணம்தான் பார்த்திடுவது  
மற்றவன் தலைதன்னைகொய்திடவா  
நாம் படித்தோம்..?

நித்தமும் நாம் உறவாடிஉண்மைஉறவுதனை  
உருவாக்கஉண்மையாகநாம் கற்போம்.....!  
துன்பத்தில் துவண்டுவிடும் சோதரனின் துயர் கண்டு  
துளிகூட இரங்காமல் இருந்திடவா இரவுபகலாய்  
நாம் பயின்றோம்.....?  
திருமதி.அ.வினோதினி  
விரிவுரையாளர்

மொழிகள் கற்கைதுறை

**මතකයේ රැඳෙන ඔබ**

දිනක ඔබ මා හමුව  
 සසර නිශ්මයක් වූ හමුද  
 බොළඳ මා සිත නොඉවසුමිව  
 තවම ඔබ නොපිණිනේ මන්දැයි  
 ලතාවුනෙමි මා ගත සිත එක්තැනිව  
 ඔබ පිලිගත් දිනය තවම රහසකි  
 එනමුදු ඔබේ පැමිණීම මුකුලිත නව සුසුමක්  
 මා තුල ජනිත කළ බව නොරහසකි

තෙවනි ආසකිනි ලෝකය දකින්නට  
 ඔබ මා හට දිනකර වූයේස  
 දුටුවොව නොදුටු දේ හිමකර ගන්නට  
 ඔබ මා හට සවිමත් පලිහක් වූයේස  
 සබඳකම් දහසකට මුල පිරි ඔබේ සබඳකම  
 යම් විටෙක මායාවක්, ප්‍රේමයක්, යථාර්ථයක්  
 මා ආහිමුවෙහි ජීවත් කර වූයෙන්  
 නැවතෙක් වූයෙමි  
 පහන් ටැඹික පිලිසරණ පතන

එක්ව ආප කළ කෙලි කවටකම්  
 මව් පිය දෙනෙත් තෙත් කලේ දැයි නොදනිමි  
 හමුදු ඒ නොසනිසුන් ආවේග,  
 කාලයේ පොතට මතක එක් කරනු බව හමි දනිමි  
 ඔබ හා ගෙවූ ඒ කාලය  
 උතුරා යන ආනන්දයේ වසන්තයයි සිර කල ද  
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 ඔබ එක් කළ සදාදරණීය ප්‍රේමය ද  
 මියෙන තුරා සදා මතකයේ රැඳෙන බව  
 ඉඳුරා පවසමි.....

“ තාරණ්‍යයාණෙනි ”

ආර්.ඒ.නිමිම දිල්ලි

**Forbidden**  
 Early morning  
 Through the veils of freezing mist  
 I search  
 The warmth of your presence

Words unuttered  
 Cloud the tips of your lashes  
 I feel  
 The caress of your gaze  
 Following me

Never alone am I  
 With your presence brightening my day

Never a word exchanged  
 Never a touch felt  
 Yet you speak;  
 Scattered paper, lying about my feet  
 Your head bowed, as you pick up each  
 A light switched on,  
 In a darkened class room  
 Where I alone am busy at work

Never alone am I  
 With your presence brightening my day

A deserted bus stop  
 And I, alone  
 You're the silent sentry  
 Watching over me

As the lazy, gentle breeze drifts by  
 Carrying with it,  
 The pallu of my saree  
 My eyes are drawn  
 To your school bag  
 Hung casually over one shoulder  
 Nineteen and twenty six  
 A nagging voice whispers  
 My heart bereft  
 Realizes;  
 Forbidden..

A. W.





## The Disaster of DRUGS... What is the Way Out?

In a previous article on Drug Abuse, Addiction, and the Magic of "Getting High" we located the various reasons for drug abuse and its addiction. Further, it argued that there no such "magic" in drugs causing 'high'. This article describes the health hazards of some highly abused drugs such as cannabis, heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine, along with the ways of tackling the problem.

## CANNABIS

When cannabis is inhaled, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), is the which is the main psychoactive ingredient, passes from lungs directly to the bloodstream, and then up into the brain, creating hallucinatory effects instantaneously. Cannabis is the predominant illicit drug amongst impaired drivers. The risk of engaging in a motor accident almost doubles after smoking cannabis.

Long term effects of Cannabis are far more dangerous. Prolonged use of cannabis encourages developing psychological dependence, where users lose interest in activities like working and having personal relationships. Also cannabis smokers tend to hold their breath longer than cigarette smokers; thus comparatively about 4 fold amount of smoke particles will be deposited in their respiratory tracts. Not only that, cannabis smoke has most of the ingredients that is in tobacco smoke (without nicotine). This too adds to longer exposure of lungs to carcinogens in cannabis smoke. Moreover, adolescents are more susceptible than adults to the effects of cannabis. It is seen in many studies that regular marijuana use in human adolescents or teenagers negatively affects their learning, memory, attention, and spatial working memory, within several hours of intake.

## HEROIN

It is worth noting here that heroin is a highly addictive drug. So users seem to develop physiological and psychological dependence rather quickly, alongside tolerance. Sudden non-usage of heroin causes withdrawal syndrome which includes cramps, diarrhea, tremors, chills and sweating. Apart from heroin itself, some effects can be caused by adulterants added to dilute the heroin content. Many of these additives in street heroin may not dissolve readily, and could block the blood vessels that enter the lungs, liver, kidneys, or brain. This may cause infections or maybe even death of small groups of cells in these vital organs.

## COCAINE

Long term usage of cocaine too leads to number of health problems. It causes destruction of tissues in the nose if sniffed or snorted, and respiratory problems if inhaled for e.g hemoptysis, bronchospasm, chest pain, asthma, etc. As cocaine intoxication impairs good judgment it can lead to risky sexual behavior. This could lead to infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS. Chronic drug users may get malnourished and lose weight due to reduced appetite.

Cocaine creates the greatest psychological dependence after methamphetamine. One may develop tolerance and severe depression to a level that one could commit murder or suicide. Cocaine related deaths are often a result of the heart stopping (cardiac arrest) followed by respiratory failure. Cocaine is a powerfully addictive drug. Once addicted, there is a high chance of a user relapsing into addiction even after long period of abstinence, due to past memories or exposing to cues associated with the drug which cause craving.

## METHAMPHETAMINE

Methamphetamine alters judgment ability of users leading to engage in risky behaviour. This, when coupled with increased libido by the stimulant, lead abusers to have unprotected sex, and increase infection of HIV. Another problem that users face is "meth mouth", a severe dental damage where teeth gets rotten, broken and stained.



*Disrupted nose tissue due to Cocaine abuse*



*Meth mouth*

### SO WHAT IS THE WAY OUT?

The drug menace has driven the whole world to find remedies for. It is not surprising, even in Sri Lanka, stringent measures need to be taken to effectively deal with the situation given that Sri Lanka is being used as a drug trafficking hub.

Sri Lanka has been fortunate enough to develop a national policy for the prevention and control of drug abuse about a decade ago owing to the consciousness of the drug situation in the country. The Government believes that the most effective approach for the problem should be a comprehensive, balanced and coordinated strategy. Thus a broad approach is to be adopted to control drug

abuse, within the context of development. This will focus on the links between drug abuse and poverty reduction, crime prevention, and improving health.

The main organizations that fight against drugs at international level are the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). In Sri Lanka, the National Dangerous Drug Control Board (NDDCB) and the Police Narcotic Bureau (PNB) operate as government organizations, whilst Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC) is a leading non-government organization that has taken up the task.

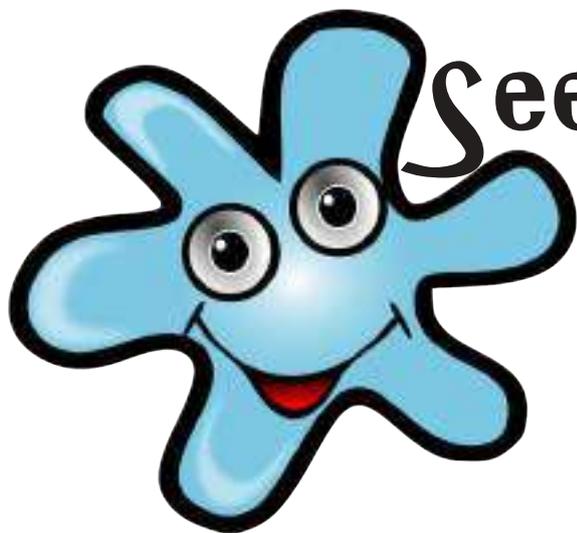
#### ***Prime measures recommended by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) Report 2013 to reduce the costs of drug abuse are:***

- 1. Drug prevention: prevention programmes are cost effective. Generally, these programmes are designed to build strong communities and families, giving the young necessary skills to make wise choices and decisions. Engaging a broader community has been successful success in preventing drug abuse and its consequences.*
- 2. Screening and brief interventions and referral to treatment mechanisms for individuals who have initiated drug abuse.*
- 3. Drug treatment with behavioural and/or medical interventions for the addicted, along with protecting their privacy and combining of rehabilitation and social integration components.*
- 4. Providing family and community support to the affected, including education, childcare, housing, relapse prevention, case management and spiritual support etc.*
- 5. More efficient justice system which can discourage abuse and offer alternatives to imprisonment. This may require reorientation of national drug control and justice policies of a country.*
- 6. Having social programmes not directly related to drug abuse (like vocational training for the youth) which have potential to reduce the consequences of drug abuse. These, though require high investments, give long term benefits in many other ways apart from reducing the effects of drug abuse.*

Policies and initiatives against drug trafficking should be incorporated into development programmes in all countries, whilst strengthening institutions and sharing the responsibility at all levels of government.

As a final note, parents should be vigilant of their children as well as their peers. It is important for youngsters to have appropriate knowledge and self-confidence to stand against and say "no" to what could make them a future drug addict. This will be the most important fact that all of us should be aware of, to protect the future generation and support them to become responsible citizens in a developing nation.

Prof. K. Sarath D. Perera and R. G. G. Roshan Pradeep  
Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Natural Sciences



# Seeing the UNSEEN

The three influenza related deaths at the Kandy General Hospital was not a good omen for the dawn of 2017. In addition, the rise of dengue has reached unprecedented proportions. Meanwhile, new discoveries about gut flora made by the scientists at the University of Washington is delightful news for those concerned with body weight. These predicaments and discoveries involve two extremes of the same minute creatures known as microorganisms. These organisms are found in every environment from the depths of the ocean to the freezing cold plains of the Antarctic. This group includes not only viruses, bacteria and fungi but protozoans and rotifers as well. They play a vital role in the production of many components useful to us such as food and food additives: probiotics, soy sauce; health care products; antibiotics and vaccines as well as many other compounds including leather and textiles. They play an important role in environmental management in the degradation of waste from the forest floor as well as on the Blue Mandel garbage mountain. Hence, without these microscopic organisms our lives could become considerably difficult.

However, many are the tales of death and destruction at the hands of microorganisms. The bubonic plague which spread throughout Europe from 1346 to 1353 is estimated to have killed 30-60% of the population. The spread of dengue in our own island nation reached horrifying limits each year. The irony of such diseases is that the resulting waves of anger and hatred are focused on the vector organism and not the real culprit. The bubonic plague is spread by rats but the felon is the bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*. Similarly, dengue is spread by a mosquito but the cause is a flavivirus.

The study of each disease causing pathogen, known as medical or clinical microbiology, is essential to the cure and eradication of the disease. Today, a more pressing need of microbiological knowledge in light of the upcoming

drought is concerned with waterborne diseases. These are linked to another branch of microbiology related to public health. Stored water, either pure or stagnant, can result in the spread of diseases. Though more attention is placed on the chemical and physical qualities of water in Sri Lanka, the microbial quality of water takes precedence in the spread of disease. Monitoring the microbial quality of portable water is an international criterion.

"It is far more important to examine a (water) supply frequently by a simple test than occasionally by a more complicated test." Thus, indicators are used to get a guarantee of microbial quality. As there are too many pathogens to monitor and as the majority of pathogens are derived from faecal material non-pathogenic bacteria are used as an index of faecal pollution of water. Hence, a microbiological test insisted by the Sri Lankan Standards Institute (SLSI) to clear water as safe for drinking is the faecal coli form count. This test determines the presence of the bacterium *Escherichia coli* which is a common gut microbe. Hence, the presence of this bacterium in water is an indication of recent faecal contamination. Since faeces carry a multitude of pathogens including various types of intestinal worms, lice and ticks and other microbes which result in cholera, typhoid, trypanosomiasis and countless others, the absence of *Escherichia coli* gives an assurance about the microbial quality of water.

However, microbiological tests are costlier and more time consuming than chemical and physical tests and also require specialist knowledge. Hence, many laboratories may not opt to perform these tests in Sri Lanka. The OUSL has decided to help rectify this gap in knowledge and personnel by offering an undergraduate degree programme in microbiology. The programme will be offered by the Department of Basic Sciences of the Faculty of Health Sciences and include all areas of microbiology from medical, pharmaceutical to industrial and environmental. The course, still in the initial stages of preparation, will be combined with biotechnology to give a unique and tailor-made education to prospective students keen to establish themselves in Sri Lanka.

*Rachitha Wickramasinghe*

*Dept. of Basic Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences*

## Felicitating Professor Vidanapathirana

21st March 2017 was a remarkable day for us at the OUSL, for Professor Upali Vidhanapathirana's journey of 27 years of academic service for the university as an academic came to a celebrated closure, when he officially retired from service.

He joined the OUSL in 1990 as a Senior Lecturer, then a newly established National Higher Educational Institution of Distance Learning, after pre-maturely ending his career at the Peoples Bank, leaving behind a career of material benefits, perks and comfort. This was when the OUSL situated in a few sparsely and tentatively erected buildings located within the main premises of the Nawala campus. Prof. Vidanapathirana rose through the ranks from Senior Lecturer, founding Head of the Department of the Department of Social Science (HSS). Subsequently, he became the Dean of the Faculty of HSS from 2000- 2003 and later the Vice-Chancellor of the University from 2009 to 2011.

As I sat through the felicitation day ceremony, what became clear to me was that staff and students of the OUSL were proud of the achievements of Professor Upali Vidhanapathirana's tenure and were also proud members of a University built and strengthened by him Professor UV can be described as humble, friendly visionary, a team leader, a fair but firm and emphatic leader.

An Economist by training and a Marketer by Profession, he obtained a BA (Hons) in Economics from the University of Kelaniya, MSc in Economics at AIT (Thailand) and PhD. From Jawaharlal Nehru University India.

Prof. UV's contribution to national development, education and the OUSL has been recognized and celebrated nationally and internationally. Some of his key research initiatives, scholarship and publications include the many contributions in the field of Development Economics with particular focus on rural agriculture and related aspects with more than 80 publications to his name.

With over twenty-seven years of professional engagement, Prof. UV has held a number of international, national, institutional and administrative positions.

He is the founding Professor of the Department of Social Studies (SSD) at the OUSL which is rapidly gaining reputation at a national level at present for its pronounced and formidable role in the academia as well as in the Sri Lankan society in general.



As a visionary, he was one of the key pillars driving the collective, cooperative and binding -culture and the mission of the SSD, building it up to its present status with the visionary inputs and at times with "ruthless brutally merciless" but courageous decision making. One of the recurring memories in my assortment of celebrated recollections of Professor Upali (or Prof.UV as we used to call him) is, the interludes exchanges and engagements at the "Social Weather Station", during the lunch break or an occasional tea break. He would often steer in the latest social topics of concern at the institutional or national level, with ease. The "social whether station" was a full house of vibrant exchanges, dialogues and interactions during lunchtime, especially when Prof' UV was around.

During the time when he was the Dean of the HSS faculty , Ms Deepthi his personal Assistant, revealed the very professional nature of his interactions and pointed out that he was an unwavering decision maker who introduced several new innovations to the administration of the office of the Dean during his time. Prof Vidanapathirana introduced the Faculty advisory committee, the Vistas journal and the inaugural unveiling of the photographs of former Deans of the HSS Faculty. Further, he had also initiated a tree planting campaign at the OUSL during his tenure as the Dean of the faculty. Most importantly, he initiated a research culture within the faculty by creating incentives and structures particularly for conducting research in ODL focusing on the OUSL experiences and realities.

Perhaps, one of the key elements in my everyday interactions with Prof Vidanapathirana , especially during our discussion over a cup of plain-tea , was religion: Buddhism. I was personally drawn to the simple but profound philosophical ideas he used to quote especially during times of acute professional distress or misery as means of solace and consolation. He would return from an occasional retreat and would encourage us to 'not to be too late in our own pursuit of inner peace'.

His unstinted and yeoman service to the OUSL, The DSS and the nation is significant and praiseworthy. The University organized a felicitation event for Prof. Vidanapathirana to pay a tribute to his invaluable service rendered to the University system and to the nation on 21st March 2016 at the New Conference Hall of the OUSL. Further a felicitation volume in honour of Prof. Vidanapathirana will be launched in the near future to honor his retirement ceremonially.

Prof. Vidanapathirana, held the reins of Vice Chancellor of the University from 2009- 2011.

Ms Sumithra Perera, who worked closely with him during this period as his personal secretary, describes him as a man who loved the University and worked with dedication, coming to office early and working until late evening each day. She spoke of him with obvious admiration and respect, commenting that he was very easy to work with and a 'true leader who delegated work and trusted a person to do it, without constant monitoring and interference'. As a person deeply interested in meditation he did not let work stress affect him and when confronted with problems he was fond of saying, 'Athath marenne dalath ekka'. Prof Vidanapathirana valued and took pride in the resources of the University, preferring to look to skills, expertise and labour from within the University, only outsourcing work in the absence of internal resources. Thus much of the work undertaken in the University during his period in office bears the stamp of its own staff. Among these are the Staff Development Centre and Examination Hall No 06. The legacy of Prof Vidanapathirana during his period as the VC includes, setting up the Kilinochchi Study Centre in 2012, constructing Examination Hall No 06 and completing Examination Hall No 04 in the Central campus and declaring open new buildings in Puttlam in 2009, Anuradhapura, Ampara and Kalutara in 2010, and Polonnaruwa in 2011. He provided leadership for the expansion of the CRC 2 Building extending its floor space from 1000 sq meters to 2300 sq meters. He also re-structured the upper floor of Exam Hall 03 converting it into a state of the art Conference hall with a 700 seating capacity. This has filled a long felt need for a venue for official functions. It was also the venue in 2011 for the first, and to date only, Convocation to be held within the University in its history and is further evidence of his pride in the University and its resources.

Concerned about bringing the Open University into the international spotlight he introduced an International Research Conference on Open Distance Learning in 2011 which saw the participation of delegates from many Asian countries. Two significant Memoranda of Understanding were signed during his time, one with the UNESCO to establish a Research Chair on ODL and the other with the Commonwealth of Learning to test a quality assurance tool known as a 'Review and Improvement Mechanism' (RIM) at the OUSL . National awareness of the role of the University in

dissemination of education was provided by a series of activities undertaken in all Regional Centers to mark the 30th Anniversary of the University in 2010.

Many other endeavors to further improve the OUSL may be attributed to him; a staff Development Centre was set up and a Staff Development Course specifically designed for ODL teachers was established in 2010. Further the Educational Technology Division was restructured into the Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe); Performance of Regional and Study Centers were evaluated using key performance indicators and the best Regional and Study Centers were rewarded on 1st January 2012.

Pride in one's place of work and study, are worthy of cultivation. Accordingly, 'The Open University of Sri Lanka 1980-2010' jointly edited by Prof Vidanapathirana and Prof. Ryhana Raheem, tracing the history of the University was launched in line with the 30th Anniversary, placing on record, institutional memories which often disappear with the passage of time. A distinct University tie proclaims the identity of the University to the outside world, while within its premises the trees he loved to plant stand as silent reminders of his tenure as VC. In a letter written after a tree planting campaign Prof Vidanapathirana states: 'With your moral and physical support let us convert the limited unused space we have in this University to "a botanical garden" which will give us shelter, fresh air, fruits and more than anything else scenic beauty and comfort to our future generations of staff and students. These plants belong to you. Nurture them and protect them. I expect the same spirit from you to transform our University into a centre of excellence in teaching, learning and research in the near future.'

At the function to mark his retirement Prof Vidanapathirana raised a question: he felt all university staff should ask themselves, namely, 'Have I done my job?'. He also quoted Rabin-dranath Tagore with a minor twist, 'Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action, into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let this University awake'. Prof. Vidanapathirana can take pride in the knowledge that he truly did his job and played his part to help the OUSL thrive during his tenure as Vice Chancellor. Special thanks to Ms Sumithra Perera for taking time off to share her thoughts and locate information, photographs and correspondence which formed the basis of this article.

*Sunethra Goonetilleke*

## *Memories of a Vice Chancellor*



### *Memories of Prof Tudor Silva*

Prof Tudor Silva who was a fellow student at Christ Church Boys College Baddegama remembers Prof UV from the school-days as an active boy several years junior to him. Coming from a school more renowned for sports than academics, Prof UV together with Prof Tudor Silva and Dr Vijitha Nanayakkara (also a previous Vice Chancellor of the OUSL) formed a rare three-some who reached the heights in academia in Sri Lanka. Reminiscing about their boyhood he commented that Prof UV was jovial and always cracking jokes. He only became serious after O/L's going on to become a great scholar who shared a common interest with Prof Tudor on the subject of poverty. Asked to comment on what was most remarkable about Prof. UV; Prof Silva stated that it was his decision to undertake a PhD at JNU after becoming a senior academic. He commented, 'I was very impressed by his adaptation to student life. Not many people do so successfully'.

*Based on an interview by Sunethra Goonetilleke with Prof Tudor Silva*



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