



University Grants Commission



University of Jaffna

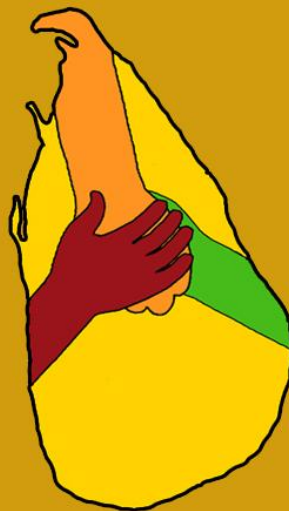
# **National Conference on the Role of Higher Education in Reconciliation**

**On 13 - 14 June 2013**

**at Green Grass Hotel, Jaffna**

## **ABSTRACTS**

### **Program & List of Invitees**



# National Conference on the Role of Higher Education in Reconciliation

**Abstracts, Programme and List of Invitees of the Conference**

conducted by

the University Grants Commission

jointly with

University of Jaffna

University Grants Commission,  
No 20, Ward Place,  
Colombo 07,  
Sri Lanka

Tel: +94 11 266 9653  
Fax: +94 11 268 6041  
E mail: [vicechairman@ugc.ac.lk](mailto:vicechairman@ugc.ac.lk)  
Web: [www.ugc.ac.lk](http://www.ugc.ac.lk)

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Shammika Wijewardane

Cover picture concept and design  
Pulasthi Thalagala, SAITM Media Faculty

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## **Message from the Chairperson, University Grants Commission**

It is with great responsibility and happiness that I send this message at the inauguration of the first ever National Conference on the “Role of Higher Education in Reconciliation” organized by the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka. I appreciate very much the collaboration of the University of Jaffna in this important national endeavour. On behalf of the UGC, I also appreciate the continuous encouragement given by Prof Rohan Gunaratne and Mr. Nandana Wijesinghe in organizing the event.

After three decades of suffering, thanks to the Leadership of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka, and the direct involvement of security forces, Sri Lankans could now live in peace, and the country is moving rapidly towards national development. The intellectual capacity, competencies and the creative energies of our nation coupled with its rich natural resource base could develop our country and strengthen our position in Asia. The rich culture and, ancient technologies blended with the new knowledge gained through higher education will transform our country into a “Knowledge Hub” in Asia.

It is very important to realize that developing countries must move rapidly to join the fast moving knowledge-based global economy while protecting their own cultures which are essential environmental factors to express their inherited genetic abilities, especially the intelligence and the health. Successful transition to a knowledge economy depends on the production of a knowledge based skilled workforce. The Universities as the centres of creation and dissemination knowledge prove important in guiding the nation towards a knowledge economy.

I agreed with Prof Rohan Gunaratna, when he said that the academia, the higher education institutions in Sri Lanka, made a very little contribution in regaining peace & harmony in the country. Therefore it is our duty now to be directly involved in sustaining the peace & harmony and be directly involved in national development. Therefore the involvement of academia in reconciliation process is an urgent necessity and we are confident that the academia would be happy to play a significant role in this crucial hour.

I take this opportunity to thank Prof Ranjith Senaratne, Vice Chairman of the UGC for his genuine interest and commitment in organizing the event. I am confident that the recommendations emanating from the 2-day conference will be implemented by the UGC and HEIs, facilitating the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka.

Profesor Kshanika Hirimburegama

*Chairperson, University Grants Commission, and  
Chair & Senior Professor of Plant Sciences, University of Colombo*

## **Interview with Judge Christopher G. Weeramantry**

*Former Judge of the International Court of Justice and Emeritus Professor at Monash University*

*You are widely considered one of the most distinguished contributors to the theory and practice of international law. Looking back on your extraordinarily rich experience of the last half century and thinking of the coming decades, how do you see the role of international law?*

International law has become a key instrument in creating a better future for humanity. It can be regarded as the “common law” of the world in the making. It symbolizes but also provides a framework for a world that has become increasingly interdependent and interconnected.

There was a time when international law was viewed as a subject on the periphery of legal theory and practice. Today it impregnates every facet of domestic law. This applies to most areas of governance, including trade, investment, public health, labour, transport, communications and environment. Even in the rather nebulous area of human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was only a declaration, was followed by two conventions - one on civil and political rights and the other on economic, social and cultural rights. These represented a dramatic transformation of mere declarations into binding state obligations. The same is true of international humanitarian law. War crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are now punishable under international law. The international Criminal Court has been instituted expressly for this purpose.

*Let me turn to an area to which I know you have devoted much thought and energy, namely nuclear weapons. International law does not appear to have made much headway in removing the threat posed by nuclear war? What is your assessment of the situation?*

There can be no doubt that the nuclear scourge remains one of the fundamental problems of our time. In this the major powers, and in particular nuclear weapon states, bear a grave responsibility. Regrettably, in recent years a huge blanket appears to have fallen over the suffering already inflicted by the use and testing of nuclear weapons. In a recent communication to the 2015 NPT Review Conference Preparatory Committee I stressed that the use of nuclear weapons is in all circumstances contrary to international humanitarian law. In the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice all 14 judges concluded: “There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion

negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”

Unfortunately, this has not happened, which is why I have strongly supported negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. As I have argued on many occasions, there cannot be one law for the nuclear powers and another law for the non-nuclear powers. By the very principles of law and justice, which the powerful states seek to uphold, the nuclear weapon in any shape or form stands condemned. We need therefore a legally binding convention that prohibits the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat, or use of nuclear weapons in any form whatever and offers a phased plan for total nuclear disarmament.

There are, of course, precedents for the legal prohibition of particular weapons. The Hague Convention of 1899 prohibited the use, in international warfare, of dum dum bullets, and the 1997 Mine Ban Convention bans the stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines. We are, therefore, in the strange situation that states which consider the use of dum dum bullets to be too cruel to be used in warfare, do not seem to think the same about nuclear weapons!

*In recent years you have drawn attention with increasing vigour to the contribution that the world's major religious and ethical traditions could make to the development of international law. What exactly do you have in mind?*

The proposition can be reduced to this: international law would be both richer and more authoritative to the extent that it can effectively incorporate the shared wisdom of the world's major religious and ethical traditions.

In Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Confucian teaching, universally applicable rules of conduct are well-developed. These include matters fundamental to international law such as the sanctity of treaties, the respect due to diplomats, duties towards neighbours, duties of sovereigns, care of the environment and humanitarian law.

In Europe natural law and the teachings of Christianity dominated international law till a marked separation of international law and religion occurred in the 17th Century. Writers like Hugo Grotius deliberately distanced the discipline of international law from religion because they were writing in the midst of wars of religion.

The Thirty Years War raged in Europe between 1618 and 1648 and tore European societies apart, with competing interpretations of scriptures by different sects and churches. As a consequence the practice of justifying legal principles through their accordance with religious teaching grew weaker. With

the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 the moral authority formerly exercised by the Papacy or the Holy Roman Empire largely dissipated. Thus Grotius and his contemporaries had good reason for developing the modern principles of international law by turning to human experience and secular understanding of natural law. Moreover with the extraordinary growth of commerce, technology and military power, the practice of states became increasingly removed from its moral foundations. International law also tended to cast itself in a largely monocultural and Eurocentric mould and so shut itself away from other major sources of perennial wisdom. It is time for the sources of ancient wisdom to be reintegrated into the understanding and practice of our contemporary international legal system.

*Am I right in saying that you see the environmental crisis as a catalyst for this rethinking of the foundations of international law?*

Yes, absolutely. Legal principles are rapidly evolving in international environmental law, and these need to be nourished by ancient wisdom which embodies the experience of thousands of years of contact between humanity and the environment.

There is, in fact, a convergence of the insights of all the major religious traditions around a number of key themes, in particular, the stress on simple living and avoidance of ostentatious consumption; the emphasis on responsibilities and not just rights; the stress on spiritual principle as opposed to merely material well-being; the notion of trusteeship of the earth's resources; the value attached to the common good rather than individual self-interest; and the rights of future generations.

Perhaps I can illustrate this by drawing on one of the hadiths, which are an important source of Islamic learning. We are told to visualise a two decked boat. As is the human tendency, quarrels break out among passenger. There are quarrels on each deck but more importantly a major quarrel erupts between the passengers on the lower deck and those on the upper deck. Passengers on the lower deck need to go to the upper deck to fetch water, but owing to their quarrels this becomes impossible, whereupon a hothead in the lower deck says in effect: "there is water everywhere. Can't you see this?" He takes an axe and readies himself to chop a hole in the lower deck close to where he is seated. Here is a poignant description of how our environment is in danger of collapse by the selfish, foolish and short-sighted actions of some. It is also a graphic description of how the nuclear bomb could destroy all humanity. The lesson is clear enough: there is no alternative but to settle our disputes and cooperate in the use and long-term management of our resources.

Of course, such principles are likely to gain in their effectiveness and legitimacy to the extent that they become central to the dialogue of faiths and cultures, and to our educational processes. And once these principles infuse the thinking of educators and jurists, they will also over time infuse the principles, concepts and procedure of legislators and judges.

## **Proposal**

Universal peace education is the only way to avoid war.

Cross cultural understanding, the work of great peace philosophers, the religious traditions of different countries, the criminality of nuclear weapons, the fundamentals of international law, the peaceful resolution of disputes, the terrible sufferings and cruelties of war – all these should be taught in every school. Every country should make peace education compulsory for every child for two hours per week.

A world of peace and justice, living under international law, has been the dream of humanity down the centuries. Peace education is the route to the achievement of that dream.

## **Post-Conflict Strategy: Promoting Moderation, Tolerance and Coexistence**

Dr. Rohan Gunaratne

*Professor, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*

At Independence, the greatest heritage Sri Lankans inherited was ethnic and religious harmony. However, the perfect social harmony was disrupted when Sri Lankan politicians started to ethnicize the Sri Lankan society. Ethnic entrepreneurs divided Sri Lankans by ethnicity and religion, caste and class, region and district. In a conflict that lasted three decades, Sri Lanka suffered both in the north and the south. We must never allow the monster of racism or religious intolerance to rear its ugly head on Sri Lankan soil. We are all equal in humankind, we are brothers and sisters of one nation, and we are Sri Lankans. Unless kept in check, misguided ethno-religious nationalism will take Sri Lanka back in time and kill another generation of our precious youth. Poor governance and geopolitics led to discord, enmity and fighting. In the north and south, generating fear and suspicion of each other led Sri Lanka to suffer from two of the world's most vicious conflicts. When the process of healing is about to begin in the north and across the country, another conflict likely to last several decades, is about to begin. The anti-Muslim rallies by those who are misguided can lead to a riot, which would polarize communities and start another generational campaign of terror. After thirty years of bloodletting, government must prepare Sri Lankans to embrace peace? Departing from the ideal of a Sri Lankan family, some still look at each other through the religious and ethnic lens. Embracing everyone as one's own, every Sri Lankan should take a stand against racism. It is paramount for every Sri Lankan to rise to the nation's greatest challenge of promoting harmony so that we do not take our freedom for granted. Every Sri Lankan should be an ambassador of reconciliation and harmony. There is no greater challenge for Sri Lanka and Sri Lankans.



## **Strategic Perspectives in Reconciliation**

Professor P. Gopalakrisna Iyer

*Emeritus Professor in Hindu Civilization, University of Jaffna*

In Sri Lanka after a long struggle of colonial rule, we were fortunate enough to enjoy a life of freedom and peace. Not only freedom from the colonial rule, but also freedom from poverty and ignorance. Though our ancestors contributed to the richness of culture and development of our country, now time has come for everyone to contribute whole heartedly in evolving reconciliation.

During the last three decades our country met severe loss in every aspect due to conflict crisis. As a result there is an urgent need for reconciliation. In this context we all must join in hands to develop the feeling of acceptance of new ideas, messages and medium to be proposed in the National Conference Organized by the University Grants Commission on the Role of Higher Education in Reconciliation. In this paper strategic perspectives in Reconciliation according to the views of Hinduism will be highlighted in comparison with ideals of other religions. The final goal is to achieve peace and social harmony.

Sri Lanka is a multi racial, multi religious and multi lingual country. A nation may be small in its size and extent but we are all expected to be magnanimous in mind and love in heart, to bring about reconciliation.

To achieve reconciliation the first strategic perspective is to develop inter religious friendship and understanding. Though this is a difficult task yet it can be achieved if all the religious dignitaries join in hands. This will bring about a result in making the people to have a better social and religious understanding.

In this paper various ideals of Hinduism in connection with the main theme will be discussed in relation to ideals of other religions. Few examples can be cited:

The Rigveda, the Ancient sacred Scripture of the world, from its time till today asks us to move together to develop common ideals and purposes which is the spirit needed for today for the reconciliation.

*Meet together, talk together  
May your minds comprehend alike  
Common be your action and achievement  
Common be your thoughts and intensions  
Common be the wishes of your hearts  
So may there be union amongst you*

(Rigveda X 192)

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the learned Philosopher aptly compares this Vedic theme with the sayings of Lord Buddha. The Buddha tells us that if we wish to escape from suffering, we should develop understanding and increase compassion *Prajna* and *Karuna*. *Karuna* is the quality in which *Prajna* manifests itself. It is compassion for the whole of humanity. Though these two themes are very ancient yet they are strategic guidelines for reconciliation even today for the creation of a harmonious society.

We can draw inspiration from more than one of the existing religions. We do not want a new religion, but we need a new and enlarged understanding of the old religions. The future of religion is bound up not with the acceptance of one religion by all or a state of conflict, but the acceptance of a fundamental unity, with a free differentiation which will be a perspective path in reconciliation. We believe that a deeper understanding of the different forms will lead to united comprehension of truth of social harmony and it will help to re-establish the peace and social harmony.

Further, this paper stresses in the strategic perspective of culture and ethics in reconciliation and the place to be accorded to them in the University Curriculum. Educational experts say that Education is for all and now the time has come to proclaim that culture is for all which is needed in reconciliation and to mould a harmonious society.

## **Possible Roles of the University System in Promoting Social Harmony and Mutual Understanding among Communities in Sri Lanka**

Professor Kalinga Tudor Silva

*Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya*

### **Introduction**

Sri Lanka is slowly recovering from a quarter century of war, with battle lines clearly drawn along ethnic lines. Sadly so far the authorities have not made an adequate effort to either respond to the underlying causes of the armed conflict or address the need for ethnic reconciliation among affected communities. The universities themselves became ethnically polarized during the war with a resulting “ghettoization of universities”. While the neglect and disempowerment of universities have been a feature of post-independence politics in Sri Lanka, the universities continue to present considerable potential for contributing towards promoting mutual understanding and reconciliation among diverse communities in the country.

In my view the universities can contribute towards promoting mutual trust among communities in the following ways:

1. Advocacy and policy dialogue
2. Curriculum development
3. Research
4. Art and culture
5. Staff and student exchanges between universities in different parts of Sri Lanka
6. Engaging students in reconciliation and rehabilitation work

### **Advocacy and Policy Dialogue**

The universities have the expertise and intellectual resources needed for careful assessment of policy options available in various sectors in post-war Sri Lanka. Many of the ongoing policy dialogues relating to issues like setting up of the Northern Provincial Council are informed by narrow party politics or narrow ethno-nationalist perspectives. In this context possible contributions from various disciplines such as social sciences and humanities has been completely neglected hampering identification and introduction of effective measures for promotion of social harmony and ethnic reconciliation.

## **Curriculum Development**

There is an urgent need to revise and update educational curriculum in the university system in keeping with the emerging needs in the country. In the social sciences and humanities the updated curriculum must help the students to better understand the demographic profile, political and social realities, cultural landscape and challenges in post-war Sri Lanka and meaningfully and effectively contribute towards promoting mutual understanding among communities. Through curriculum reform and field experiences, the university system must equip the students to acquire the necessary intellectual background, skills including language skills, attitudes and commitment. All Sinhala and Tamil speaking students must acquire a working knowledge of each other's languages as a prerequisite for preparing them to serve in a multiethnic society with sharp social and cultural disparities.

## **Research**

Production of new knowledge in the form of research is a primary function of the universities. Over the past several decades the universities have gradually neglected this primary function due to the scarcity of personnel and equipment, limitation of funds, absence of a research culture and preoccupation with undergraduate teaching. In order to fill our current gaps in knowledge regarding barriers to communication, dividers and social bridges, changing demographic profile in the country, social justice and problems of resettling populations a systematic programme of research in humanities, social sciences, law, education and other related disciplines must be developed and implemented with state support and the assistance of relevant agencies including international donors.

## **Art and Culture**

Art and culture have a key role to play in influencing social and cultural life, promoting mutual understanding and highlighting sensitive issues like language barriers, need for social justice, rights based concerns, complexities associated with social and cultural diversity in the country and politics and poetics of ethnic reconciliation.

## **Staff and Student Exchanges**

One effective way to overcome the process of ghettoization of universities noted above is to promote academic exchanges between universities in different parts of the country. The exchanges may be organized in such a way that exchange scholars and visitors spend a considerable period in a university other than their own in order to learn from each other, in order to facilitate exposure to

developments in another area in the country and in order to promote exchange of scholarship in relevant fields.

### **Student Engagement in Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Work**

Irrespective of their fields of study students must be encouraged to gain first-hand experience in rehabilitation and reconciliation work conducted by various agencies in the country including state sector agencies, private sector and civil society organizations. This may be seen as a useful opportunity for helping students to gain practical experience, skills, attitudes, and preparation necessary for contributing in a useful capacity in rebuilding Sri Lanka aftermath of the war.

### **Conclusion**

I am not saying that these are the only or even the most important ways in which the universities can contribute towards rebuilding Sri Lanka after the traumatic experiences in recent decades. In this discussion I have not paid any attention on technical fields like medicine, engineering and IT where I have no knowledge at all and perhaps we can take it up during the discussion. In conclusion, the state-run university system in Sri Lanka with all ethnic groups represented in varying numbers has much potential towards contribution to the process of post-war reconstruction in the country.



## **Strategies for Reconciliation among University Students**

Dr. K. Kobindarajah

*Vice-Chancellor, Eastern University, Sri Lanka*

“Reconciliation is to understand both sides; to go to one side and describe the suffering being endured by the other side, and then go to the other side and describe the suffering being endured by the first side.”

*(Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Monk, Activist and Writer. b.1926)*

The re-establishing of cordial relation in a country which was engulfed by a bitter and bloody war for more than three decades is a challenging task but achievable. Accepting and understanding of multiculturalism and equal rights, building positive relationship, acknowledging and dealing with post war trauma are some of the vital pieces of reconciliation. Winning party – in Sri Lankan context Majority community, should be generous to join hand with minority to win the hearts of the minority. In my opinion, accepting others as fellow citizens who deserves all rights as we do will be the key for reconciliation.

Several articles and research papers about reconciliation and peace building have been published by experts. Aim of this paper is to present some meaningful ways to achieve reconciliation among university students to make our country as a peaceful place on earth where individual’s rights and dignity are guaranteed. Some are listed below:

1. Teaching our students, preferably at school level, about the positive part of both sides – Nowadays fundamentalists in all communities in our country talk about the negative side of other communities by simply ignoring the positive sides. For instance, Sinhalese think that Tamil leaders are for separation of the country forgetting the fact that Tamil leaders’ contribution to independence and unity of our country. Similarly when talk about July 1983 riots, Tamils think that Sinhalese are killers simply forgetting the fact that many Sinhalese in Colombo saved lots of Tamil families during the riot
2. Teaching languages as compulsory modules at school and university level to understand each other’s values
3. Encouraging sports and cultural activities among students and communities to bridge the gaps created by the war

4. Student-community exchange program – Sending a group of students to live with cross communities for at least two weeks to understand their culture and life styles. Encouraging students to adopt a cross community village and look after the well being of the society live in that village

The strategies for reconciliation among university students in Sri Lanka including above mentioned strategies will be explained in depth in the full paper.

## **Role of Faculty in Peace Building and Reconciliation: a Christian Perspective**

Professor Priyan Dias

*Senior Professor and Head of the Department, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Moratuwa*

The most important aspect of the ministry of Jesus Christ is considered to be that of reconciling Man to God. Those desiring to avail themselves of this reconciliation are expected to confess their sins and repent of them, inevitably requiring painful soul searching and honesty. After Jesus' death and resurrection the Christian religion spread from the original Jewish community to non-Jews, called Gentiles. Paul of Tarsus was a key figure in this movement. There was controversy within the church at the time because some Jewish Christians wanted the Gentiles to become Jews before they became Christians, while Paul opposed this. Perhaps as a result St. Paul's firmness, the Christian church is one of the most diverse social organizations today, with the Christian religion being contextualized into various societies and cultures.

We learn from these ideas that "peace" and "reconciliation" do not merely mean conflict free co-existence. Reconciliation involves honest confession of wrongdoing. It involves a commitment to diversity. And those who work for reconciliation may find themselves in conflict with those who wield power.

As an academic community, diversity must be especially prized because diversity is the fount of excellence. If indeed the USA has achieved excellence in its academic institutions (as judged by world university rankings), it must surely be because of its active pursuance of diversity. As a Sinhala faculty member in a Southern Sri Lankan university, I believe that we can make our institution more excellent by (i) enhancing the diversity of our academic staff (without compromising excellence); and (ii) making our environment welcoming enough to attract the best students in the country, but especially the best Tamil speaking students (who may feel threatened in a predominantly Sinhala environment).

All academic pursuits can also be viewed as critiques of power, and in that sense similar to the examples set by Jesus and St Paul. The entire scientific enterprise depends on the critique of existing knowledge. Increasing the autonomy of universities is one way in which we can encourage this spirit of critique. At the same time, within those universities even the youngest faculty members must be given parity of intellectual status; and students encouraged to challenge their teachers.

Above all, universities are institutions looked up to by society for intellectual honesty. This is particularly important in social science disciplines that require sifting of often contradictory evidence. Compromise here will lead to history and sociology being recruited to serve the interests of those in power. On the other hand, the pursuit of honesty in such disciplines can result in great acts of reconciliation. For example Kevin Rudd would not have been able to make his great speech of apology to the Australian aboriginal people if History Professor Peter Read had not done the research on it as a postgraduate student 25 years prior to it.

In short, as an academic community, if we are true to some of our self evident callings such as honesty, excellence and critique, reconciliation will be an automatic by-product.

## **Aesthetics/ Performing Arts as a Mode for Reconciliation and Peace Building**

Professor Sinniah Maunaguru

*Former Head, Department of Fine Arts, Eastern University of Sri Lanka*

The Universities of Sri Lanka have a 70 year history of bringing together young people from all communities to gain undergraduate and post-graduate education. At present, in seven universities, Sinhala, Tamil, Muslims and other minorities such as the Burghers, all study side by side. In four universities, Sinhala, Pali, Hindi and English are taught - not Tamil. In three Universities, Tamil, English, Sanskrit are taught but not Sinhala. In six universities, Fine Arts and Drama & Theatre are taught in the Swabhasha medium with no chance for Sinhala medium students to learn about Tamil language traditions and vice versa. Apart from a few minor exceptions, the curricula of these programmes are segregated in terms of language and content. This process of cultural segregation that begins from primary school-level continues into university education, even to the post-graduate level. Sinhala students of Kandyan or low country dance forms have no opportunity to learn indigenous Tamil dance forms. Similarly, Tamil-speaking students of Bharathanatiam and Kooththu dance forms cannot learn Kandyan or low-country dance. This has the effect of producing performers and teachers for our stages and our schools and universities whose perspective on culture and arts is informed only by one side of Sri Lanka's rich heritage, and is ignorant of the other. The work they do subsequently carries this poverty of perspective and invariably an ethno-centric bias.

My own career was formed by a somewhat different experience of education and exposure to the pluralism of Sri Lanka's performing arts traditions, and I wish to draw some lessons from my experiences at the University of Peradeniya (1960-1965, as a student), University of Jaffna (1976-1990, as a junior lecturer) and Eastern University of Sri Lanka (1991-2008, as a senior academic). During my time at Peradeniya, during the golden age of cultural revivalism and innovation, I witnessed how Dr. Ediriweera Sarathchandra and Dr. S. Vithyanandan borrowed dance and music forms and a great deal of inspiration from each other's ground-breaking work. Although I was regrettably not trained in any of the Sinhala traditions, I left Peradeniya with a deep appreciation and considerable understanding of these. This experience opened me to the possibilities of collaboration with Sinhala artists and academics during the following years whilst I was in Jaffna - even when armed conflict broke out and many Sri Lankans became polarized along ethnic lines. In fact, I would say that it was the professional and personal relationships that I had developed with like-minded Sinhala colleagues that was a major factor in preventing me from

endorsing a view of the conflict as simply Sinhala vs Tamil. In the years I was at the Eastern University, I was able to invite some Sinhala artists to present their work and collaborate with my students - and found that a few embraced this opportunity to develop multi-ethnic productions.

I argue that despite structural and political obstacles to meaningful collaboration between 'Sinhala' and 'Tamil' performing arts traditions in Sri Lanka, where there has been exposure to serious learning about the diversity and complexity of music, dance and theatre forms in this island, this has resulted in the emergence of artists who work across these boundaries to produce works and collaborations - even in the face of ethnic conflict. In the field of performing arts in the post-war period in Sri Lanka, we must adapt our educational structures and system to nurture exactly a form of deep engagement with the plurality of Sri Lanka's performance traditions - for ALL our students, regardless of their own ethnicity. This is what will enable us to produce true artists, not just 'Sinhala' or 'Tamil' artists.

## **Sport for Peace and Social Harmony**

Hemasiri Fernando<sup>1</sup> and B.L.H. Perera<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*President, National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka*

<sup>2</sup>*Olympic Academy, National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka*

At the societal level the 'sport' is a concept which allows human being to work in social harmony within the respective institutional setting by examining values through cultural structure. As a concept the 'sport' is a flexible and tolerable tool to be used by different cultures. However the how you shape sport is a matter for our culture. At present in Sri Lanka the concept of 'Sport' has been forgotten and been replaced by 'Sports' more prominently to drive nation building, sustainable economies, image building affairs. The Sports is already a tool to generate money through sponsorship, government initiatives, endorsements, contracts and prize money. This provides the popularity within the sport industry due to a large global audience.

The modern sports in the present society has been evolved with technology, government involvement, management, media and different perceptions all shaping the face of professionalization in modern sports. Commercialization has changed the face of sport in every way possible to take advantage of the phenomenon based on our culture. Sport needs to provide and support character building, discipline, competition, physical fitness, mental fitness, religiosity and nationalism (Wilkerson *et al*: 1997). Therefore the sport needs a shape to bring social recurring themes; the peace and social harmony. The objective of this study is to create a clear identity of 'Sport' delivery mechanism to drive peace and social harmony in conflict situations.

A coherent body of thinking, programs and curricula is required within Sri Lanka higher education to draw upon sport as an instrument to soothe potential frictions of nationality, culture and ethnicity. The types of games people choose to play, the degree of competitiveness, the types of rules, the constraints on the participants, the groups that do not benefit under the existing arrangements, the rate and type of change, and the reward system in sport provide us with a microcosm of the society in which sport is embedded. A body of knowledge regarding what might work for reconciliation and what has not, and why not, taking into account local knowledge and context and wealth of institutional experience will provide us with much needed initiatives that offer long term exchange, learning and support between communities. The Japanese have a culture of reaching a settlement midway in their Baseball leagues to satisfy both sides in a loose and flexible way but some Baseball game judgment is made according to one set of rules and order. In order for Japan and some other nation

to "play" together in this world, they need to find a standard desirable for the development of both nations. According to Professor William Kelly of Yale it is 'dry' business mentality-the ability of the individual is everything against 'wet' group mentality in sport, In addition, in Japan there is a general idea that a referee or judge's decision is not absolute. The outcome of discussions by several people, according to the Japanese custom, should be given more respect than the judgment of one individual. So, umpires huddle together to discuss a debated call, and the outcome is explained to the spectators who are not satisfied without.

Our approach in delivering 'Sport' in to post conflict environment needs a samurai warriors approach "who serve the group in return for which their status is guaranteed for life. How 'sport' forms and develops within a conflict situation and need a careful approach is immune to social cohesion; relationships, communication platform, to create a door to a peaceful dialogue, connecting individuals to communities. In 1971 People's Republic of China and the United States launched the famous 'ping pong diplomacy' to ensure the shape of Sport to suit the situations considering 'Let it be' approach. Sugden (2006) stressed that the "[s]port is neither essentially good nor bad. It is a social construct and its role and function depends largely on what we make of it and how it is consumed." In Sri Lanka 'Sports' has yet to deliver peace and harmony shaped by 'Sport' as a concept to the door steps of the needy people of our society.

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**Building a Rainbow Nation through Peace Building and Reconciliation:  
The Role of Universities**

Professor Ranjith Senaratne

*Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission, No. 20, Ward Place,  
Colombo07*

The nearly three decade long protracted and internecine conflict that caused inestimable damage to life, limb and economy of the country has come to an end. People of all communities now not only yearn for lasting peace, security and amity, but also are keen to ensure that there will be no more bloodletting on this blessed land in the future. This has afforded an unprecedented opportunity for bringing about peace and reconciliation between the different communities, especially among the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims in Sri Lanka. Thus time has come for Sri Lankans to collectively chart a vision for a harmonious future for our nation and a wholesome and united Sri Lankan identity.

In this context, it becomes vitally important to articulate a common and shared vision of an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society– a vision for a shared future for the citizenry irrespective of the ethnicity, creed, religion or caste. This demands replacing the present culture of suspicion, fear, mistrust, intolerance and violence with a culture of trust, confidence, tolerance, and respect for human rights and human diversity. In this regard, as highlighted in the LLRC report, while acknowledging the losses and suffering of the past and providing mechanisms for recompense, it is of paramount importance to address issues of lack of trust, prejudice, and intolerance whilst accepting commonalities and differences between the different communities. Then only can we create an environment where each citizen becomes an active participant in society and develop a sense of belonging of being Sri Lankan.

Reconciliation is a process and not a one-time event; it has a beginning, but no end. Thus it cannot be achieved overnight. And seeds of reconciliation can take root only if there is forgiveness and compassion. While the leaders of all the political parties and the community leaders have a pivotal role to play in the reconciliation process, the intellectuals and scholars of the country have an inescapable responsibility and a moral obligation to direct, facilitate and accelerate the reconciliation process towards building a rainbow nation.

Sri Lanka has a total of 17 state-run universities coming within the purview of Ministry of Higher Education with an academic strength around 5000 which includes, among others, over 750 professors, 1750 PhD holders and a comparable number of Master's degree holders. Intellectuals have a profound

responsibility and a moral obligation in contributing to resolving national issues. Moreover there are over 75,000 students who constitute the best of the best youth of the country as only around 3% of those going to school have the privilege of entering the state-run universities. Therefore the state-run universities constitute the brain trust and the intellectual pulse of the country. Our universities are sustained by public funds. Thus we have a moral obligation to serve the community and society at large. However, we did precious little towards resolving the ethnic strife. At least, in this crucial hour of reconciliation, we ought to contribute our might to facilitate, accelerate and direct the reconciliation process. Our failure to rise to the occasion will only serve to push our beloved country into a quagmire of chaos, discord and dissent.

In order to promote and entrench a culture of social harmony and reconciliation in the universities in particular and the country in general, a collective and concerted effort should be made by the university community at three levels: i.e. at the national level, institutional level, and faculty and departmental level. Our universities need to be recreated and retooled in order to successfully meet that challenge by keeping reconciliation in focus. To this end, we ought to produce a new generation of university leaders with understanding, knowledge, and finesse to manage ethnic and religious tensions, and a new breed of champions who can reunite the divided hearts and minds advancing the cause of peace building and reconciliation in our motherland.

In this connection, the following measures and activities will prove useful in making universities a strategic partner and an effective catalyst in promoting the process of peace building and reconciliation in the country.

**At National Level:**

1. Moulding and fashioning the thinking of legislators, policy makers and political and community leaders for a united Sri Lanka
2. Moderating the extremist and hard-line social, religious and political elements
3. Conducting necessary awareness and enlightenment programmes to sensitise the general public on the need for peace building and reconciliation
4. Developing a public opinion against ethno-centric forces and adversarial politics that could sow the seeds of discord, dissent and disharmony among the communities
5. Serving as a guiding light and driving force of peace building and reconciliation through intellectual inputs, mature guidance and wise counsel
6. Playing the role of whistle blower

**At Institutional Level:**

1. Articulating a new mission for universities towards peace building and reconciliation
2. Formulating necessary institutional policies and establishing necessary structures, systems and procedures to accomplish the mission
3. Introducing by-laws prohibiting ethno-centric and adversarial politics and activities that could sow the seeds of discord, dissent and disharmony among the communities
4. Changing the outdated admission policy of universities from the district quota system to a merit based system
5. Providing greater funding for peace building and reconciliation programmes and activities

**At Faculty and Departmental Level:**

1. Introduction of peace education to students of all the streams by way of compulsory modules comprising the concepts, philosophy and models of tolerance, coexistence and reconciliation
2. Inculcating the concept of multi-religious, multi-ethnic and plural society in the hearts and minds of students through appropriate curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities
3. Creating greater awareness of linguistic and cultural commonalities and affinities among the different communities
4. Promoting trilingual education in universities as it is the language that unifies and binds a nation. Producing more Tamil teachers through conduct of certificate, diploma and degree programmes proves particularly important.
5. Training and grooming a new generation of dynamic staff with passionate commitment to peace building and reconciliation
6. Translating major literary works in Tamil into Sinhala and vice-versa. Software programmes offer an easy and quick solution to an otherwise difficult and time-consuming process
7. Introduction of comparative religion and similar subjects at HEIs
8. Development of link programmes between universities in the South and the North and East providing for academic, research and out-reach programmes of mutual interest. Exchange of staff and students, joint research, joint community work, joint publications etc. prove useful in promoting harmonious co-existence

9. Stocking the university libraries with books and reading material related to peace building, social harmony, reconciliation etc. and reports of Truth Commission, LLRC etc from other countries.
10. Establishment of organic links with Interfaith Reconciliation and Peace Committees at district and provincial levels
11. Drawing upon the Sri Lankan expatriate community to strengthen and foster the process of peace building and reconciliation initiatives by HEIs through appropriate link programmes with foreign universities

Implementation of the above will engender a new culture in universities leading not only to moulding a new generation of academic staff but also to producing a new breed of graduates equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to champion the cause of peace building and reconciliation in our country paving the way for a rainbow nation.

## Conference Programme

**13 JUNE 2013**

- 08:30-09:30 Registration
- 09:30-09:40 **Welcome address**  
*by Prof. Vasanthi Arasaratnam, Vice-Chancellor, University of Jaffna*
- 09:40-09:50 **Overview and Objectives of the Conference**  
*by Prof. Ranjith Senaratne, Chairman of the Organizing Committee and Vice Chairman, UGC*
- 09:50-10:00 **Address** *by Prof. Kshanika Hirimburegama, Chairperson, UGC*
- 10:00-10:30 **Opening Address:** “Universal Need for Peace Education”  
*by Judge C.G. Weeramantry, former Judge of the International Court of Justice and Emeritus Professor at Monash University*
- 10:30-11:00 **Keynote speech:** “Post-conflict Strategy: Promoting Moderation, Tolerance and Coexistence” *by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Professor, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*
- 11:00-11:25 **Refreshments**

### **Session 1: Strategic Perspectives in Reconciliation**

Chair: Prof. S. Pathmanadan, Emeritus Professor of History, Univ. of Peradeniya

- 11:25-12:25 **Team Presentations** by Ven. Prof. Waragoda Pamarathna, Former Head, Dept. of Sanskrit, Univ. of Peradeniya, Most Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomez, Emeritus Archbishop, Emeritus Prof. P. Gopalakrishna Iyer, Dept. of Hindu Civilization, Univ. of Jaffna and Dr. M.A.M. Shukri, Former Head, Dept. of Arabic & Islamic Studies, Univ. of Peradeniya
- 12:25-12:45 Discussion

## **Session 2: Empathy, Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

Chair: Prof. W.D. Lakshman, Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Colombo

- 12:45-13:30 **Team Presentations** by Prof. S. Pathmanathan, Emeritus Professor of History, Univ. of Peradeniya, Prof. Achi Ishaq, Chancellor, SEUSL and Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva, Senior Professor, Faculty of Arts, Univ. of Peradeniya
- 13:30-13:45 Discussion
- 13:45-15:00 Lunch

## **Session 3: Grooming a New Generation of Staff and Students to Create a Harmonious Society**

Co-Chairmen: Prof. Achi Ishaq, Chancellor, SEUSL and Prof. Ranjith Senaratne, Vice Chairman, UGC

- 15:00-15:45 **Strategies for Building Reconciliation Capabilities in Universities** by Prof. Sarath Amunugama, Vice-Chancellor, Univ. of Kelaniya, Prof. Vasanthy Arasaratnam, Vice-Chancellor, Univ. of Jaffna, and Dr. K. Kobindarajah, Vice-Chancellor, EUSL
- 15:45-16:30 **Role of Faculty in Peace Building and Reconciliation** by Rev. Prof. Wilegoda Ariyadeva, Univ. of Ruhuna, Prof. M. Vethanathan, Univ. of Jaffna, Prof. Priyan Dias, Univ. of Moratuwa, and Prof. S.H.M. Hasbullah, Univ. of Peradeniya
- 16:30-17:00 Discussion/ Refreshments
- 19:00-21:00 **Multicultural Evening** (organized by Prof. Jayasena Kottegoda, Vice-Chancellor, UVPA, Prof. Sunil Ariyaratne, Senior Professor, Univ. of Sri Jayewardenepura and Prof. S. Maunaguru, Former Head, Dept. of Fine Arts, EUSL, jointly with Ramanathan Academy and Swami Vipulanandan Institute
- 20:30 **Dinner** organized by the University of Jaffna jointly with Wayamba University and SEUSL (comprising a harmonious and exciting blend of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim cuisines)

**14 JUNE 2013**

**Session 3 (Contd.): Grooming a New Generation of Staff and Students to  
Create a Harmonious Society**

Chair: Prof. Shantha Hennayake, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Peradeniya

08:30-09:00 **Case Studies:** Presentations by Mr. B.P.A. Jayaweera, University of Wayamba and Mr. Deva Michael, University of Ruhuna

**Session 4: Students: Future Ambassadors for Re-uniting Hearts and Minds of  
Sri Lankans**

Chair: Dr. Sunil Wijesiriwardena, Visiting Lecturer, University of Colombo

09:00-09:45 **Presentations** by Student Leaders from the South, North, East and South East

09:45-10:15 Discussion  
(Chaired by Prof. Shantha Hennayake and Dr. Sunil Wijesiriwardane)

10:15-10:45 Refreshments

**Session 5: Art & Culture and Sports as Vehicles for Reconciliation**

Co-Chairmen: Mr. Hemasiri Fernando, Chairman, National Olympic Committee and Dr. Sunil Gunawardane

10:45-11:15 **Aesthetics/Performing Arts as a Mode for Reconciliation and  
Peace Building**

by Prof. S. Maunaguru, Former Head, Dept. of Fine Arts, EUSL

11:15-12:00 **Sports for Peace and Social Harmony**

by Mr. B.L.H. Perera, Olympic Academy, National Olympic Committee and Ms. Hasini Haputhanthri, Senior Programme Officer, German Development Cooperation

12:00-12:30 Discussion

12:30-13:30

**Session 6: Seeing through Different Eyes for a United Sri Lanka/ Formulation  
of a Reconciliation Action Plan ( RAP)**

Chair: Prof. Achi Ishaq, Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Prof. S. Pathmanathan, Prof. Kshanika  
Hirimburegama, and Prof. Sitralega Maunaguru, SEUSL

13:30-13:45 **Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks**

by Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva

13.45 Lunch

**-END-**

## List of Invitees

No.	Name	Designation / Affiliation	E-mail
<b>Religious Dignitaries</b>			
01	Most Rev. Fr. Oswald Gomez	Chancellor, University of Colombo	aboswaldgomis@sltnet.lk
02	Ven. Prof. Waragoda Pemarathna Thero	Retired Professor, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya	Waragoda_p@yahoo.com
03	Prof. P. Gopalakrishna Iyer	Emeritus Professor and Former Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna	
04	Mawlawi M.L.M. Hashim	Director, Islamic Studies, East Ceylon Arabic College	
<b>Special Guests</b>			
05	Judge C.G. Weeramantry	Former Judge of the International Court of Justice and Emeritus Professor at Monash University	info@wicper.org
06	Dr. Rohan Gunaratne	Professor, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore	isrkgunaratna@ntu.edu.sg
<b>Chancellor</b>			
07	Prof. Achi M. Ishaq	Chancellor, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	achi.ishaq@gmail.com
<b>Members of University Grants Commission</b>			
08	Prof. Kshanika Hirimburegama	Chairperson	chairman@ugc.ac.lk
09	Prof. Ranjith Senaratne	Vice Chairman	ransen.ru@gmail.com
10	Prof. H. Abeygunawardana	Commission Member	habeygunawardane@yahoo.com

11	Prof. S. Mohanadas	Commission Member	smohandas68@yahoo.com
12	Prof. Sampath Amaratunga	Commission Member	deanfmsc@sjp.ac.lk sppamaratunge@yahoo.com
13	Prof. Malkanthi Chandrasekera	Commission Member	msriyani@hotmail.com
14	Mr Vijaya Malalasekera	Commission Member	v.malalasekera@gmail.com
15	Mr. Tissa Nandasena	Secretary	secretary@ugc.ac.lk

#### **Former Vice-Chancellor**

16	Prof. W.D. Lakshman	Emeritus Professor in Economics and Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Colombo	wdlakshm@cmb.ac.lk
----	------------------------	--	--------------------

#### **Vice-Chancellors**

17	Dr. Kumara Hirimburegama	University of Colombo	vc@cmb.ac.lk
18	Prof. Atula Senaratne	University of Peradeniya	vc@pdn.ac.lk
19	Dr. N. L. A. Karunaratne	University of Sri Jayawardenepura	vc@sjp.ac.lk
20	Prof. Sarath Amunugama	University of Kelaniya	vc@kln.ac.lk
21	Prof. Ananda Jayawardane	University of Moratuwa	vc@mrt.ac.lk
22	Prof. (Mrs) Vasanthy Arasaratnam	University of Jaffna	ujvc@mail.ewisl.net
23	Prof. S.G.J.N. Senanayake	University of Ruhuna	vc@admin.ruh.ac.lk
24	Dr. K. Kobindarajah	Eastern University, Sri Lanka	vc@esn.ac.lk
25	Dr. S.M.M. Ismail	South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	vcoffice@seu.ac.lk
26	Prof. K.H. Ranjith Wijayawardana	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka	vc@rjt.ac.lk
27	Prof. Mahinda Rupasinghe	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	vc@sab.ac.lk

28	Prof. S.J.B.A. Jayasekera	Wayamba University of Sri Lanka	vc@wyb.ac.lk
29	Dr. V. Nanayakkara	Open University of Sri Lanka	vc@ou.ac.lk
30	Prof. Ranjith Premalal De Sliva	Uva-Wellassa University of Sri Lanka	vc@uwu.ac.lk
31	Prof. Jayasena Kottegoda	University of the Visual and Performing Arts	vcuvpa@sltnet.lk

### **Rectors**

32	Dr. N. Varnakulenthiren	Rector, Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University of Sri Lanka	
33	Mr. K.K. Arulvel	Rector, Vavuniya Campus, University of Jaffna	rector@mail.vau.jfn.ac.lk

### **Academic Staff**

#### **University of Peradeniya**

34	Prof. S. Pathmanadan	Emeritus Professor of History, Faculty of Arts	Paths386@sltnet.lk
35	Prof. Shantha Hennayake	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	skhennal@sltnet.lk dvc@pdn.ac.lk
36	Dr. S. Rajendran	University of Peradeniya	asrajendran@hotmail.com
37	Prof. Gamini Samaranyake	Senior Professor, Faculty of Art	
38	Prof. V. Nandakumar	Professor, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts	rkvndakumar@gmail.com
39	Prof. Kalinga Tudor de Silva	Senior Professor, Faculty of Arts	kalingatuodorsilva@gmail.com
40	Prof. S.H.M. Hasbullah	Professor, Faculty of Arts	dr.hasbullah@gmail.com
41	Dr. Sumathy Sivamohan	Senior Lecturer in English	ssumathy@sltnet.lk
42	Prof. Nimal Sandaratne	Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture	nimalsanda@yahoo.com
43	Dr. Pradeepa Wijetunga	Librarian	librarian@pdn.ac.lk

### **University of Colombo**

- |    |                           |  |                           |
|----|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 44 | Prof. Jayadewa Uyangoda   | Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Policy | uyangoda@gmail.com        |
| 45 | Prof. Nelufer de Mel      | Professor, Department of English                             |                           |
| 46 | Dr. Tissa Ravindra Perera | Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Management and Finance           | ravinda@webmail.cmb.ac.lk |
| 47 | Dr. Sunil Wijesiriwardena | Visiting Lecturer, Sri Palee Campus                          | oceanway@sltnet.lk        |

### **University of Kelaniya**

- |    |                             |  |                    |
|----|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 48 | Prof. Dayaratne Edirisinghe | Head, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences     | ambagaha@yahoo.com |
| 49 | Prof. Patrick Ratnayake     | Professor, Faculty of Humanities                               | patrick@kln.ac.lk  |
| 50 | Prof. S. Galmangoda         | Professor, Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies | galman@sltnet.lk   |

### **University of Sri Jayewardenepura**

- |    |                        |   |  |
|----|------------------------|---|--|
| 51 | Prof. Sunil Ariyaratne | Senior Professor, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences |  |
|----|------------------------|---|--|

### **University of Moratuwa**

- |    |                       |  |                        |
|----|-----------------------|--|------------------------|
| 52 | Prof. W.P.S. Dias     | Department of Civil Engineering  | Priyandias55@gmail.com |
| 53 | Dr. Jagath Munasinghe | Head, Department of Town and Country Planning, Faculty of Architecture | jagathnm@sltnet.lk     |

### **University of Ruhuna**

- |    |                             |   |                         |
|----|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 54 | Prof. Ruchira Cumararatunga | Senior Professor, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences and Technology | ruchira@fish.ruh.ac.lk7 |
|----|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------|

- |    |                                     |   |                      |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 55 | Rev. Prof. Wilegoda Ariyadeva Thero | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences           | ariyadeva@yahoo.com  |
| 56 | Mr. Deva Michael De Silva           | Lecturer, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences | devamichael@live.com |

**Rajarata University of Sri Lanka**

- |    |                      |  |                |
|----|----------------------|--|----------------|
| 57 | Dr. Sena Nanayakkara | Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities | sena@rjt.ac.lk |
| 58 | Mr. G.G.A. Thalwatte | Lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities        |                |

**University of the Visual and Performing Arts**

- |    |                                 |  |                                   |
|----|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 59 | Prof. Ariyaratne Kaluarrachchi  | Dean, Faculty of Dance and Drama                               | dean-dd@upa.ac.lk                 |
| 60 | Prof. Susiripala Malibada       | Director, Staff Development Centre                             |                                   |
| 61 | Prof. Kolitha Bhanu Dissanayake | Professor, Department of Music                                 |                                   |
| 62 | Mr. Chandraguptha Thenuwara     | Head, Department of History and Theory, Faculty of Visual Arts | chandraguptha.thenuwara@gmail.com |

**University of Jaffna**

- |    |                       |  |                            |
|----|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 63 | Prof. G. Mikuntha     | Dean, Faculty of Agriculture                       | gmikunthan@gmail.com       |
| 64 | Dr. S. Krishnakumar   | Dean, Faculty of Applied Science (Vauniya Campus)  | fasdean@mail.vau.jfn.ac.lk |
| 65 | Prof. V.P. Sivanathan | Dean, Faculty of Arts                              | deanarts@jfn.ac.lk         |
| 66 | Dr. T. Mangaleswaran  | Dean, Faculty of Business Studies (Vauniya Campus) | fbsdean@mail.vau.jfn.ac.lk |
| 67 | Prof. S. Sathiaseelan | Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies                  | samsathya2006@yahoo.com    |
| 68 | Prof. T. Velnampy     | Dean, Faculty of Management studies and Commerce   | tvnampy@yahoo.co.in        |

- 69 Dr. S. Balakumar Dean, Faculty of Medicine deanmedicine@jfn.ac.lk
- 70 Prof. K. Kandasamy Dean, Faculty of Science kkanda@jfn.ac.lk

#### **Eastern University of Sri Lanka**

- 72 Prof. S. Maunaguru Professor, Department of Fine Arts maunasiththan@gmail.com
- 73 Prof. Sitrallega Maunaguru Professor, Eastern University of Sri Lanka sitrallega@yahoo.com
- 74 Mr. M. Ravi Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Culture vijjiarts@yahoo.com
- 75 Rev. Fr. A.A. Navaretna Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Culture

#### **South Eastern University of Sri Lanka**

- 76 Mr. K.A. Mubarak Senior Lecturer
- 77 Mr. M.A.M. Sameen Director, Student Support Service
- 78 Mr. A. Razim

#### **Swami Vipulananda Institute**

- 79 Dr. K. Premakumar Director rajaeswaran@esn.ac.lk

#### **Ramanathan Academy**

- 80 Dr. T. Shanthnathan Ramanathan Academy

#### **Federation of University Teachers Association**

- 81 Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri President nrdewasiri@gmail.com
- 82 Dr. Rohan Fernando Secretary gwfer@ou.ac.lk rohanfernandoosl@gmail.com

#### **Special Invitees**

- 83 Rev. Fr. Dr. X.N.F. Kurukuasuriya archivescolombo@gmail.com
- 84 Mr. Hemasiri Fernando Chairman, National Olympic Committee
- 85 Mr. Faisz Musthapha faiszmusthapha@sltnet.lk

86	Selva editor of Tamil CNN		tamilcnn@gmail.com
87	Dr. Nirekha de Silva	Research Officer, SAARC Cultural Centre	nirekha@gmail.com
88	Mr. Kushil Gunasehkera	Founder/ Chief Trustee at Foundation of Goodness	kushil@foguc.org
89	Prof. Jezeema Ismail		jismail@sltnet.lk
90	Dr. M.A.M. Shukri		mamshukri@gmail.com
91	Dr. Yousuf K. Maraikkar	Chairman, Roshan Trading Co. (pvt) Ltd	roshantc@yahoo.com
92	Dr. Ameer Zainudeen		azainudeen@gmail.com
93	Mr. Mirak Raheem		mirakraheem@yahoo.com
94	Dr. Sharvarnandan Muthukrishnan	Point Pedro Institute	
95	Mr. Nandana Wijesinghe	Director of Social Development Affairs	harmonycentresl@gmail.com
96	Mr. Saabir Hashim	Motivational Speaker, Sisu Diriya National Programme	saabirhashim@yahoo.com
97	Dr. A.S.A. Safras	Secretary, The Foundation for Reconciliation	drsafra@gmail.com
98	Mr. Sarath Chandra de Silva	Chairman, International Foodstuff Company (Pvt) Ltd	
99	Mr. Rizvi Zaheed	Managing Director, Hayleys Agriculture Holdings Ltd.	
100	Mr. Anton Nallathamby	Director, Asia Foundation	anallathamby@asiafound.org
101	Prof. Gamini Adhikari	Director General, Central Cultural Fund	
102	Mr. Mario Gomez	Director, International Centre for Ethnic Studies	mario@ices.lk
103	Mr. Amesh Thennakoon	Publication Officer, Institute of Policy Studies	publications@ips.lk
104	Mr. Pradeep Peiris	Director, Social Scientist's Association	

105		Country Director, Save the Children Programme	
106		Director, Marga Institute	
107	Mr. B.L.H. Perera	Olympic Academy, National Olympic Committee	
108	Ms. Hasini Haputhanthri	Senior Programme officer, German Development Cooperation	hasini.haputhanthri@giz.de

### **Ethnic Cohesion Coordinators**

109	Prof. S.A. Athukorala	University of Peradeniya	saktissa@slt.lk
110	Prof. Premakumara De Silva	University of Colombo	prema112@hotmail.com
111	Dr. B.M. Najeeb	Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo	bmnageeb@yahoo.com
112	Prof. Shirley Wijesinghe	University of Kelaniya	slwijesinghe@kln.ac.lk
113	Dr.(Mrs.) K.G.C. Disanayake	Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute, University of Kelaniya	chitudissanayake@yahoo.com
114	Dr. C.A.D. Nahallage	University of Sri Jayewardenepura	charmali2@hotmail.com
115	Ms. M.B. Mufitha	University of Moratuwa	tsivakumar@uom.lk
116	Dr. M.G.V. Wickremasinghe	University of Ruhuna	vineetha@zoo.ruh.ac.lk
117	Mrs. T. Reveendran	University of Jaffna	rthanes@jfn.ac.lk
118	Dr. Enoka Kudavidanage	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	enokakudavidanage@gmail.com
119	Mr. Sangeeeth Rathnayake	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	sarang@sab.ac.lk
120	Dr. K.B. Wijesekera	Uwa Wellassa University of Sri Lanka	kolitha85@hotmail.com
121	Mr. Pradeep Thennakoon	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka	ptennakoon@gmail.com
122	Mr. S. Balendran	Eastern University of Sri Lanka	sbalan822@yahoo.com.au

123	Dr. P. Illango	South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	elango@seu.ac.lk
124	Mrs. V. Sangaranarayanan	Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies	svathsaladevi@yahoo.com
125	Dr. A.S. Chandrabose	Open University of Sri Lanka	ascha@ou.ac.lk

### **Administrative Staff, University Grants Commission**

126	Dr. M.M.P. Premakumara	Additional Secretary, Academic Affairs & University Admissions Department and Human Resources Department	admission@ugc.ac.lk
127	Mr. R.A.U. Ranaweera	Accountant	finance@ugc.ac.lk
128	Mrs. W. Karunaratne	Additional Secretary, International Cooperation Division	icd@ugc.ac.lk
129	Mrs. W.M.V. Wanasinghe	Deputy Secretary, Legal & Documentation Division	ld@ugc.ac.lk
130	Mrs. S.A.K. Wijewardena	Assistant Secretary, Academic Affairs & University Admissions Department	srinathisamarasinghe@gmail.com

### **Cultural Event Coordinators**

#### **University of the Visual and Performing Arts**

131	Mr. Mahanama Wickramasinghe
132	Mr. Ranjith Wickramaratne
133	Mr. Kumara Liyanawatte
134	Mrs. Palika Samanthi
135	Mr. Janaka Kottegoda
136	Ms. Janaki Balasuriya
137	Ms. Chamila Bopegoda
138	Mr. Dhanushka Lakmal

### **Swami Vipulananda Institute**

- 139 Mr. K. Mohanathanasan  
140 Mrs. Uma Srishankar  
141 Mrs. Thushyanthi Juliyan

### **Coordinators**

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 142 Mr. P. Thiyagarajah    | Regional Commissioner, Jaffna           |
| 143 Mr. N. Rajavisahan     | Deputy Registrar                        |
| 144 Mrs. Anushiya          | Deputy Registrar                        |
| 145 Mr. K. Gnanabasharan   | Senior Asst. Registrar, Faculty of Arts |
| 146 Ms. S. Kumaru          | Senior Asst. Registrar                  |
| 147 Mr. J. Jeyakumar       | Asst. Registrar                         |
| 148 Mrs. S. Kumarasami     |   |
| 149 Mr. S. Srikantha       |   |
| 150 Mrs. P.L.C. Fernando   | Senior Asst. Bursar                     |
| 151 Ms. R.M.H.D. Rajapakse | Asst. Bursar                            |
| 152 Ms. A.F.C. Fasana      | Asst. Internal Auditor                  |

### **Student Representatives**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 153 University of Peradeniya                     | Hasitha Priyashantha and 4 other student representatives |
| 154 University of Colombo                        |  |
| 155 University of Kelaniya                       |  |
| 156 University of Sri Jayewardenepura            |  |
| 157 University of Ruhuna                         | 5 Student representatives                                |
| 158 Eastern University of Sri Lanka              |  |
| 159 University of the Visual and Performing Arts | Cultural Programme                                       |
| 160 Swami Vipulananda Institute                  | Cultural Programme                                       |

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### **Organizing Committee**

Prof. Ranjith Senaratne	Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission	ransen.ru@gmail.com
Mr. V. Kandeepan	Registrar, University of Jaffna	kandeevisva@gmail.com
Mrs. Gayani Wickramarachchi	Assistant Secretary, University Grants Commission	gayaniugc@gmail.com
Mr. Shammika Wijewardana	Scientific Assistant, University Grants Commission	shammi_hotmail@yahoo.com
Mrs. Shiromi Rajasuriya	Personal Assistant to Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission	gayanashiro@yahoo.com

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