

Guest of Honor and Dean's Address of International Symposium on Sociology for Everyday Life, College House Auditorium, 3rd and 4th September – 2019

The Vice Chancellor Prof. Chandrika N. Wejeratne, Prof. Sari Hanafi, Deans, Heads, Professors, academics, member of Sociology alumni, My colleagues at the Department, distinguish invitees, past and present students.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to speak a few words today at the inauguration ceremony of 50th anniversary celebration International Research Symposium of Colombo Sociology. I feel more happier because I'm not just talking to you as the dean of the faculty of Arts or as the guest of honor but as a senior member of the department of Sociology at our university. I'm also delighted to have Professor Sari Hanafi, President of the International Sociological Association (2018-2022) and he is also a leading Sociologist at American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

Prof. Hanafi, I read your theoretical vision for the ISA which appeared in first 2019 issue of *Global Dialogue* under the title of Global Sociology: Toward New Directions there you quite convincingly argue for combining postcolonial and post-authoritarian approaches to lead a conversation around a new paradigm for pluralism in this age of multiple modernities. I'm sure we may hear more about his theoretical position in his keynote speech today.

I'm proud to say that I'm a member of ISA and very few among Sri Lankan Sociologists and I also a member of Research Committee on the Sociology of Religion (RC22) of International Sociological Association.

Sociology Department is one of the leading Departments of the Faculty of Arts. This year it marked an important milestone by celebrating fifth year of institutionalization of Sociology at Colombo. It had been 50 years since late Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya founded the department in 1969 and became its first Chair of Sociology. We decided to mark this with a year-long programme of events to celebrate sociology's achievements during the past half century. The trajectory of Sociology at Colombo from its early years to the present moment, as well as where it is likely and should be heading in facing urgent social problems in the country, in South Asian region and even beyond.

We as a department emphasized the importance of teaching students not just about society, but about the methodologies and skills required to study it, a legacy that has contributed to our level of teaching and research and positioned at Colombo and among other sociology departments in the university system in Sri Lanka as centre of excellence in the discipline.

Though we started with Sociology, the department has expanded its scope over the 50 years by accommodating other related disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology, Social work and more recently sport studies into our curriculum. Together with all these curriculum changes and the gradual change of department academic, research and physical outlook were created rather developed under the leadership of late Laksiri Jayasuriya, late Malsiri Dias, I.V.Edirisinghe, late Dingi Karunatilake, Joe Weeramunda, Tilak Hettiarachchi, Siri Hettige, Ramani Jayatilaka, Subangi Herath, Sasanka Perera, Premakumara de Silva, Chandani Liyanage and currently Nishara Fernando. All these individuals with the support of other senior and junior members of the department had contributed to bring our

department current position. This department was started with a three members you see today we have twenty out of which eleven hold PhDs from world reputed universities in UK,USA, Australia, Germany, Canada, France and India. Together with all these senior and junior collages of the department we should not just think about advancement of our own discipline, Sociology but we should also think about how sociology can be fruitfully used to understand everyday human suffering and bring solutions to them. I think the solutions will not be achieved without human intervention and mobilization in the highly neo-liberalizing world. In such intervention Sociologists can play a vital role by not merely theorizing them but also actively participation in them.

During last fifty years our Department has contributed in its capacity to trained world reputed anthropologists and sociologists. Many of them were attached to the department as young foreign researchers and department helped them to conduct their field research in Sri Lanka. Today most of them have earned a global reputation in the field of Sociology and Anthropology. I'm happy to read out name of few such academics Bruce Kapferer, James Brow, Jock Stirrat, Frank Ilence, Bob Simpson, Malcom Clark, Victoria Beker, Jonathan Spencer, Mark Vitaker, David Scott, Rohan Bastin, and Makus Mayer. I'm proud to say that our department have been continued that tradition to create next generation of Sociologists and Anthropologists who are interested in studying Sri Lankan society and culture.

When you look back 50 years of history of the department, I'm sure other would also agree with me two individuals stand out in this short history that is late Dr. Newton Gunasinghe and Prof. Siri Hettige. In my opening both of them made a tremendous contribution to enhance national and international profile of the department. I'm proud to be a student of both them and I'm very optimistic that this department will be able to produce sociologists like that caliber in the future.

Thank you on behalf of the department to everyone that came along to make this event a true celebration of 50 years of Sociology at Colombo. The organization of this symposium was a team effort and many persons in the Department contributed towards the success of this event: I would like to thank Dr. Nishara Fernando, Head Sociology, the Organizing Committee of the symposium and the Editorial Committee who were responsible for the Conference Programme and the publication of abstracts for their tremendous effort to bring this important milestone event a reality . I would like to specially thank all the junior staff members and non- academic members of the Department for logistical arrangements and all other support given in organizing the 50th anniversary since very first day that I announced to the department as then Head of Sociology.

Finally, I also would like to thank everyone who submitted an abstract for the symposium. I offer my congratulations to the presenters and wish them the very best in their future endeavors. I'm sure you will enjoy the two days deliberation and other events of our golden jubilee celebration. Thank you once again!!

Senior Professor Premakumra de Silva, PhD (Edinburgh)

Dean/ Faculty of Arts