

APPRECIATION

Professor C. Dahanayake

Emeritus Professor Charles Dahanayake, the Founder Professor of Physics and Founder Dean of Science of the University of Kelaniya passed away on 14th February 2009, at the age of 81 years.

I first met him 30 years ago when I joined the Department of Physics of the University of Kelaniya as an Assistant Lecturer (Probationary) in Physics. Ever since, I have also known him as a special, kind hearted unassuming person. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, always ready to be of assistance with excellent advice to all who seek it from him. He was always simple and ready to look at anything in an unbiased way. His simplicity was shown in his dress, expenditure, lifestyle and basically in everything that he did. He was a good, silent observer who could fit into any occasion. Never did he speak of his achievements and if it had been done, I am sure it was solely for the benefit of the younger generations. He was liked by both his colleagues and everyone in the Faculty of Science, University of Kelaniya, who all think highly of him.

Prof. Dahanayake was born on 8th February 1928 at Hiyare in the hinterland of Galle. He had his early education in the village school. After completing his first certificate examination, then known as the Junior School Certificate (JSC) in *Swabhasha*, he moved to Vidyaloka Vidyalaya in Galle and sat the JSC in the English medium in 1944. In order to study science, he entered to the Senior Form at Ananda College in Colombo in 1945. During the next two years he surprised everyone by passing the Senior School Certificate (SSC) with Arts subjects, the SSC with Science subjects, London Matriculation, and the University Entrance Examinations and being awarded the entrance Mathematics scholarship.

Prof. Dahanayake entered the University of Ceylon in 1947 to follow the B.Sc. Special Degree course in Mathematics. He won the Muncherji Framji Khan Prize at the end of his first year at the University and got permission to complete the B.Sc. Special Degree in three years. By that time he was fond of Physics and to the disappointment of the Professor of Mathematics, he moved to the Physics Department to follow the B.Sc. Special Degree course in Physics. He graduated with a First Class (Honours) in Physics in 1951.

Prof. Dahanayake started his long and successful career in Physics by joining the Physics Department of the University of Ceylon, Colombo in 1951 as an Assistant Lecturer. He moved to the United Kingdom in 1953 on a Ceylon University Government Scholarship to pursue his postgraduate studies at the University of Bristol. At Bristol, he carried out his research work on Cosmic Rays under the supervision of Prof. C.F. Powell, FRS and Noble Laureate, and obtained his Ph.D. degree in the field of High Energy Particle Physics, in April 1956.

Prof. Dahanayake returned to the University of Ceylon, Colombo soon after obtaining the doctoral degree and continued his teaching and research work. He was promoted to the Lecturer Grade II in 1956 and to the Lecturer Grade I in 1961. During his sabbatical leave period in 1962, he went to the University of Rochester, USA on a Fulbright Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship to carry out research on Primary Cosmic Rays. During the period July 1963 to September 1967 he worked at the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya as a Senior Lecturer and continued his research work on Fundamental Particles.

Prof. Dahanayake came to the *Vidyalkara* University (presently the University of Kelaniya) in September 1967 as the first Professor of Physics and the first Head of Physics in its newly established Faculty of Science. He was also the first Dean of Science, a post which he held for seven years, of the University of Kelaniya. One of his major contributions to the University of Kelaniya, and in particular to the Faculty of Science was the effort he put in as the Dean in getting the Faculty on to a sound footing. Prof. Dahanayake nursed the faculty from its infancy to maturity and we all in the Faculty of Science are grateful to him for his contribution.

Prof. Dahanayake was a pioneer of Science in "*Swabhasha*". He wrote a book titled "*Prayogika Bhawthika Vidyawa*" (Practical Physics) in Sinhalese. This book has become a widely used Physics book by Sinhala medium G.C.E. (A/L) students and first year Physics students of the Universities. He has also translated the book by J.K. Robertson titled "Optics – Geometrical and Physical" into Sinhalese and was also a member of the Physics Glossary Committee of the Educational Publications Department. He was the Chief Editor of "*Vidura*", a Science Magazine in Sinhala and the Chief Editor of Sri Lankan Journal of Physics published by the Institute of Physics, Sri Lanka (IPSL). He was the Controlling Chief Examiner in Physics

from 1971 to 1974 and the Moderator of the Physics paper from 1986 to 1990 at the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination. He was a member of the Committee to review the G.C.E. (A/L) Physics syllabus of the National Institute of Education from 1989 to 1991.

The Institute of Physics, Sri Lanka (IPSL) was one of the institutions he helped to established and he was the Founder President of it. He was a life member and a Fellow of the IPSL and was a member of the IPSL Council from its inception to his demise. He was a life member of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) and was the President of its Section E in 1974 and then the General President of SLAAS in 1990. He was a Fellow of the National Academy of Science, Sri Lanka (FNASSL) from its inception. He was a Board member of the Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) and also of the Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI). He was also a member of the Sri Lanka Association for Science and Mathematics Education (SLASME).

Prof. Dahanayake retired from the University of Kelaniya on 31st July 1993. He then continued as the Professor of Physics on contract basis till April 1996. He had the distinction of having served 45 years in Sri Lankan Universities, of which 29 years was at the University of Kelaniya. After considering the contributions he made in the fields of Physics and Education and also to the development of the University of Kelaniya, Prof. Dahanayake was appointed as an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Physics, University of Kelaniya in January 1997. During his retirement he continued to participate in many academic activities of the University of Kelaniya, IPSL and SLAAS and gave his advice and ideas to all who sought them from him. His keen intellect, wise guidance and gentle humour will be deeply missed.

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