

The Fellowship of Christian University Students

CAPTIVE

නතු නොවී වහල් කර ගැනීමට

சிறையாகாமல் சிறைப்படுத்தல்

සිංහල කථා කරන කිතුනු අපගේ
පසුගාමී ස්වභාවය හා අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වය
කේලින දිසානායක

STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES:
IS THERE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

PROF PRIYAN DIAS

பல்கலைக்கழகத்திற்கான கிறிஸ்தவனின்
அழைப்பும் ஆழமான ஈடுபாடும்
யோ. பகீரதன்

RESPONDING TO ANOTHER'S GRIEF

JASMINE OBEYESEKERE FERNANDO

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

YOHAN ABEYNAIKE

Welcome to the first edition of the re-launched FOCUS Newsletter! We have titled it 'Captive' to illustrate the twin ideas that Paul was alluding to in Colossians 2:8 and 2 Corinthians 10:5 – not to be led astray by the thought patterns of the world and to ensure that even our thinking is brought under the Lordship of Jesus. As our lives get busier in the midst of the daily grind of study, work and family life, I cannot stress enough the importance of the 6 R's for authentic discipleship in the world:

- Rest** – a break from the usual routine
- Reflect** – understanding our world and ourselves
- Recognize** – the slavery of deceptive worldly thinking
- Repent** – an intentional turning towards God

- Renew** – a commitment to re-learning things through God's perspective
- Rejoice** – experiencing the joy and freedom of godly living

In this edition we reflect on whether God is at work in the 'ordinary' aspects of life, we look at how we can discern the ideologies that shape our work places and we see how a community has been shaped to think and feel inferior. We also explore what it means to engage the university as academics and students with a fresh vision - from ideas about its structure to standing with those who grieve.

Our prayer is that this publication will be a blessing to you and that our lives will bring glory to God's Name.

සිංහල කථා කරන කිතුනු අපගේ පසුගාමී ස්වභාවය හා අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වය කෝලින දිසානායක

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ සිංහල කථා කරන කිතුනුවෝ යන සමාජ ස්ථරය නියෝජනය කරන අප විවිධත්වයෙන් අනූන ජන කොටසකි. රෝමානු කතෝලික සභාව, ප්‍රධාන පෙළේ ප්‍රොතෙස්තන්ත සභා, නිදහස් සභා වැනි විවිධ කිතුනු නිකායන්හි අප සාමාජිකත්වය දරයි. එමෙන්ම අප ග්‍රාමීය, අර්ධ නාගරික, නාගරික යන සියළු සාමාජික ස්තරයන් නියෝජනය කරයි. ප්‍රසිද්ධියේ සංවාදයට බඳුන් නොවන, ඉතා සංවේදී ගැටළුවක් වන සිංහල සමාජය තුළ දක්නට ඇති කුළ හේදයෙන් සිංහල කථා කරන කිතුනුවෝ සම්පූර්ණයෙන් නිදහස් වී ඇතැයි අපට කිව නොහැක. අප පවුල් වල ආර්ථික හැකියාව මතද අප අතර ඇත්තේ විවිධත්වයකි. මෙම පවුල් වල ආර්ථික හැකියාව පහළ තත්වයේ සිට ඉහළ මධ්‍යම පන්තිය දක්වා විහිදේ.

ඉහත කී විවිධත්වය හේතුවෙන් විවිධ කාරණා සම්බන්ධයෙන් අපට ඇති ආකල්ප හා මත වාදයන්හි විවිධත්වයද සංකීර්ණයි. බොහෝ විට අප සරල රේඛාවක් ඇඳ ඒ දේවල් වෙන්කර හඳුනාගැනීමට උත්සාහ කළත් එය කළ නොහැක්කකි.

පසුගිය වසරේ ඔක්තෝම්බර් මස 24 වන දින සිංහල කථා කරන කිතුනුවන් සමූහයක් ලෙස පේරාදෙණියේදී හමු වී අප අතර ඇති පසුගාමී හා අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වය ගැන සාකච්ඡා කළෙමු. මේ සම්බන්ධයෙන්ද අප අතර විවිධ මත නිබ්බය හැකි වුවත් අවසානයේදී අපි පහත අදහස් හා එකඟ වූවෙමු.

1. සිංහල කථා කරන කිතුනු අප බොහෝ විට නිරාවරණය වන සමාජය තුළ අප සුළුතරයක් වන අතර අති බහුතරය කිතුනු නොවන අය වෙති. මෙම බහුතරය ඉදිරියේ කිතුනු අපි අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වයකට පත් නොවුනත් පසුගාමී මානසිකත්වයෙන් කටයුතු කිරීමට පෙළඹී සිටීමු.

2. එමෙන්ම ඉංග්‍රීසි කථාකරන ක්‍රිස්තියානි සමූහය ඉදිරියේ අප පසුගාමී තත්වයකට පමණක් නොව අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වයට පත්වන බව සාකච්ඡා විය.

එම සාකච්ඡාවේදී අපගේ ප්‍රධාන සම්පත් දායකයා වූ නන්ද ලාල් විජේසිංහ මහතා ඉංග්‍රීසි කථාකරන අය ඉදිරියේ අප පත්වන අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වය සම්බන්ධයෙන් මෙසේ කරුණු දැක්වූහ.

“සුද්දෙක් වගේ වියදම් කිරීම, සුද්දෙක් වගේ වැඩ කිරීම අපට හුරු කතා බහකි. අපේ ප්‍රමිතියේ නිර්ණායකය සුද්දා වී ඇත. මෙය සභාව



තුලටද රිංගා ඇති අතර ඉංග්‍රීසි කතා කිරීම ප්‍රමුඛතාව ලැබීම සඳහා අවශ්‍යතාවක් වී ඇත. මේ නිසා සිංහල කතාකරන කිතුනුවන් තමා පිලිබඳව අවතක්සේරු කරමින් පසු බසිසි. වත්මන් කිතුනු නායකත්වයද නාගරික මධ්‍යම පාන්තික ඉංග්‍රීසි කතාකරන උදවියට හිමි වී ඇති අතර නායකත්වයට පත්වීම සඳහා අනෙක් අයද ඉංග්‍රීසි උගත යුතුය යන මතය දරයි.

රාජ්‍ය භාෂාව සිංහල වී තිබියදීත් සභාව මෙසේ සිතීම අප තවමත් විදේශ ගැති මානසිකත්වයකින් සිටින බව පෙන්වීමකි. අපේ රටේ අපි විදේශිකයන් බවට පත්ව ඇත්තේ මේ නිසා නොවේද?

ඉංග්‍රීසි බැරිකම අපට මදිකමක් වන්නේ අප අප ගැනම ඇතිකරගන්නා අල්පේච්ඡ හැඟීම හේතුකොට ගෙනයි. මෙය හැතිකර ගැනීමට ඔබ සතු දක්ෂතා සහ හැකියාවන් කෙරෙහි අවධානය යෙදිය යුතුයි. ඔබ අද සිටින තත්වයට පත් වූයේ ඔබ දක්ෂයකු බැවිනි.

දෙවැන්න, අනෙක් අය අප ගැන කුමක් පවසනු ඇත්දැයි අපි බිය වීමයි. අපට අනෙක් අයට ඕණෑ පරිදි ජීවත් විය නොහැකි බව මතක තබාගන්න. ඔවුන්ට අවශ්‍ය ආකාරයට නටන්නට අපි රූකඩ නොවෙමු. දෙවියන් වහන්සේ අපව සුවිශේෂීව මවා ඇත. අප ඒ සුවිශේෂීබව රැකගත යුතුයි. අපට හුරු හභාවකින් අදහස් කීමේ අයිතිය අප සතිය. වටින්නේ අදහස් මිස භාෂාව නොවන බව මතක තබාගන්න. අන් අය හා තමන් සැසඳීමෙන් වලකින්න. තම අඩුපාඩුවම දකිමින් තමන් අවතක්සේරුකර කතා කිරීමෙන් වලකින්න. ආත්ම විශ්වාසය ගොඩනගා ගන්න. ඔබේ අදහස් සඟවා තබා නොගන්න. ඔබේ අයිතිය වෙනුවෙන් පෙනී සිටින්න. ඔබේ අදහස් ගැන අනෙක් අය ප්‍රසංශා කරනවා ඇත.

සමාජ සබඳතා භාෂාව නිසා දුරස් නොකරන්න. සීමා නොකරන්න. එවිට අනෙක් අය ඔබ හෙළා දකින්නේ හෝ විහිලුවට ගන්නේ හෝ විනිශ්චය කරන්නේ හෝ නැතිබව ඔබ දකිනවා ඇත. ඇසුරු කිරීම සඳහා අන් අය විවේචනය නොකරන විනිශ්චය නොකරන අය තෝරාගන්න.

ඔබ වෙනත් අයෙකු වීමට උත්සාහ නොගන්න. එය කළ නොහැකි දෙයකි. එසේ කරන්නට යාමේදී ඔබ සීමා වන්නේය. ඔබට ඇති සාරවත් අදහස් බෙදාගැනීමට ඇති හැකියාව අඩු වන්නේය. මෙයට ස්වතන්ත්‍රතාව යයි කියනු ලබයි. තමා තමා ලෙසම පෙනී සිටීමේ හැකියාව අඩු අය තමා මනින්නේ අනුන්ගේ දෘෂ්ඨි කෝණයෙනි. එබැවින් සමාජයේ අභියෝග වලට මුහුණ දීමට නොහැකිව පසු බසිසි. ඉන්පසු උදාවන තත්වය ගැන කළකිරෙයි. ස්වතන්ත්‍රතාව ඉහළ අය නොසැළී තම අදහස් ප්‍රකාශ කරයි. තම අයිතීන් වෙනුවෙන් පෙනී සිටියි.

ස්වයං පිලිගැනීම ඔබ තුළ තිබේද? ඔබගේ වර්තමානය කෙරෙහි මෙන්ම අතීත අත්දැකීම් කෙරෙහි යහපත් ආකල්පයක් දරන්නේද? මුහුණ දෙන තත්වයන් දෙස විවිධ පැතිකඩ වලින් බලා අවස්ථානොච්චව කටයුතු කරන්නේද?

මෙය පහල මට්ටමක ඇති අය තම වර්තමාන තත්වය ගැන අතීතයට දොස් තබති. තමාගේ අඩුපාඩුව පමණක් දකිමින් තමා අවතක්සේරු කරන්නේ තමා ලැබූ ජයග්‍රහණ පවා නොසලකා හරිමිනි. ඉහල මට්ටමේ අය තම හැකියා සහ

දක්ෂතා මත පිහිටා කටයුතු කරයි. නම ජීවිතය ගැන කැමැත්තක් හා අභිමානයක් ඇතිව සිටී.

ඇතැම් අය නම ජීවිතයේ අරමුණ කරා යෑමේදී පවා භාෂාවේ අඩුපාඩුව දකිමින් පැකිලෙති. නමුත් අප කළ යුත්තේ අපට ලැබී ඇති අවස්ථාවෙන් ප්‍රයෝජන ගනිමින් අනාගතයේ අප සාර්ථක කරගන්නවු තත්වයන් කරා අතීත ජයග්‍රහණ සිහිපත් කරමින් ධෛර්යයෙන් ඉදිරියට යාමය. විවේචනය අප හසුරුවන ප්‍රධානතම සාධකය වන්නේය. එය ඝෘණාත්මක ප්‍රශ්න කිරීම මගින් නිෂ්ප්‍රභා කලයුතුය.



අවසාන වශයෙන් ඔබ පැකිලීමට පත්කරණ ඉංග්‍රීසි හුරුතැනිකම මගහැර යාමට උත්සාහ නොකර එයට නොබියව මුහුණ දෙන්න.”

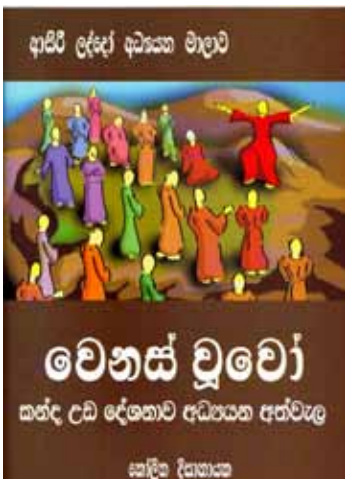
බහුතරය ඉදිරියේ කිතුනු අප පත්වන පසුගාමී මානසිකත්වය ජය ගැනීමට කදිම උදාහරණ දේව වචනය තුළ ඔණෑ තරම් දැකිය හැකි බවද සාකච්ඡා විය. අප ස්වාමි යේසුස් ක්‍රිස්තුස් වහන්සේ කටයුතු කළ බොහෝ විට බහුතරය එතුමා සමඟ නොවීය.

පැරණි ගිවිසුමේ දිවැසිවරු නොපැකිලුව සත්‍ය හා සාධාරණත්වය වෙනුවෙන් බහුතරය ඉදිරියේ පෙනී සිටියහ. මුල් සභාවේ පියවරු සභාව රෝපණය කිරීම සඳහා දෙවියන්වහන්සේ ඔවුන්ව කැඳ වූයේ ඔවුන් සුළුතරයක්ව සිටියදීය. එබැවින් සුළුතරයක්ව සිටියදී කටයුතු කිරීම කිතුනු අපට ආගන්තුක දෙයක් නොවේ.

එබැවින් සිංහල කථාකරන කිතුනු අප අතර පවතින පසුගාමී ස්වභාවය හා අල්පේච්ඡ මානසිකත්වය තව දුරටත් අප වෙළා සිටීමට ඉඩ හැරිය යුතු නොවේ.

(වෘත්තිමය වශයෙන් ඉංජිනේරුවකු හා සාමාන්‍යාධිකාරීවරයකු වශයෙන් නටයුතු කර ඇති නන්ද ලාල් විජේසිංහ මහතා දැනට කොළඹ දේවධර්ම ශාස්ත්‍රාලයේ ප්‍රකාශන අංශයේ කළමනාකරු ලෙස කටයුතු කරයි කිතුනු කලා ක්ෂේත්‍රයන් රැසකට දායකත්වය සපයා ඇති එතුමා ශ්‍රී ලංකා කිතුනු කලාකරුවන්ගේ සහෝදරත්වයේ ප්‍රථම ලේකම් වරයාද වේ)

වෙනස් වූවෝ



පේසුස් වහන්සේගේ ඉගැන්වීම් අතරින් වඩාත් කතාබහට ලක්කරන හා වඩාත් ප්‍රචලිත ඉගැන්වීම් අඩංගු වන්නේ මනෙව් 5-7 දක්වා පරිච්ඡේදවල සඳහන් කන්ද උඩ දේශනාව තුලය. යෞවන කිතුමග හි අධ්‍යයන අංශයෙහි අධ්‍යක්ෂක, ආචාර්ය අජිත් ප්‍රනාන්දු පවසන පරිදි “කියවීමේදී බොහෝ විට අපට අනපසු වන ගැඹුරු හා අපට අදාළ වන සත්‍යයන් කන්ද උඩ දේශනාවෙහි ගැබ්ව ඇත.”

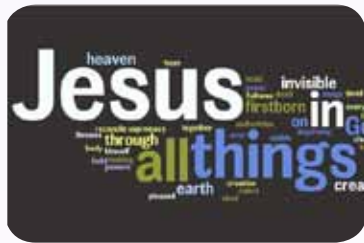
එමෙන්ම “කිතුනු ඉගැන්වීමේ හදවත වන්නේ වූ කන්ද උඩ දේශනාව මත පිහිටා, හරයාත්මක ප්‍රශ්න නැඟීමක් ඔස්සේ කිතු සම්දාණන්ගේ ඉගැන්වීමේ ගැඹුරින්, අලංකාරයන් දකින්නට පාඨකයාට උපකාර කරන කතුවරයා, ඉන් එපිටට යමින් තමන් උකහාගත් දැනුම තත්කාලීන සමාජ යථාර්ථයන් සමඟ යාවත්කාලීන කර ගන්නට ඔවුන්ට උපකාර කිරීමත් ප්‍රශංසනීය” බව ප්‍රෙස්බිටීරියන් දේවස්ථානයේ සභාපති ගරු සමන් පෙරේරා දේවගැතිතුමා සඳහන් කරයි.

එමෙන්ම මෙම කෘතියෙහි පෙරවදනට නම අදහස් එක් කරන පිළිමතලාව ලංකා දේවධර්ම ශාස්ත්‍රාලයෙහි කථිකාචාර්ය සහ රත්මිවල ක්‍රිස්තු රාජපේරේරා දේවස්ථානයෙහි පළාත භාර දේවගැතිතුමා වන නිශාන්ත ප්‍රනාන්දු පියතුමා විශ්වාස කරන පරිදි “මෙම අධ්‍යයනය තුළින් ඒකපාර්ශ්වීයව එක් පුද්ගලයෙකුගේ වදන්වලට පමණක් සවන් දී බයිබලය අවබෝධ කරගැනීමට වඩා තමන්ටම මෙන්ම කණ්ඩායමක් ලෙස තම දැනුම තුළින්, අත්දැකීම් තුළින්, කිතුනු ජීවිත වන්දනා ගමනේ අත්දැකීම් තුළින් දෙවි වදන් අවබෝධ කරගැනීමට මෙම ක්‍රමවේදය මහඟු පිටුවහලක් වනු ඇත.”

RECONCILING THE UNIVERSITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN ACADEMIC

RUTH SURENTHIRARAJ

Recently, a group of us have been meeting together, along with Vinoth Ramachandra, attempting to understand the role of a Christian academic within the university system. At a time when secularism is increasingly being seen and acknowledged as the 'neutral' stance from which all 'rational' – and therefore acceptable – debate and truth-seeking proceeds, it is becoming more challenging to be academics in pursuit of truth in our fields of knowledge, while also remaining committed to our Christian faith. Our discussion on this particular topic is by no means exhaustive, but I would like to share some thoughts that we have been encouraged to think through, as well as some questions we will continually struggle to negotiate.



It is helpful to start at the beginning: understanding the implications of claiming a Christian identity, and what it means to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. If Christ really is the point of origin, reconciliation and fulfilment of all things (Colossians 1:15-20), then our understanding of all things occur in relation to Him, and we are to evaluate the various worldviews we encounter in the light of His word (from Vinoth Ramachandra's "Christ and

the University" in Engaging the Campus: Faith and Service in the Academy) Within academia, this entails a thorough assessment of our areas of study, research and teaching against the gospel and Kingdom values outlined in God's narrative. In fact, if universities are intimately involved in the important issues and innovations of our time, then university ministry must actively seek to engage its students, faculty and administrators through conversations with and in research, teaching, critical thinking, truth-seeking, and academic and national concerns (see the 'Dialogic Model' advocated by Terence Halliday in "Engaging the Whole University for Christ", in Engaging the Campus: Faith and Service in the Academy).

An important part of this engagement is the recognition that God is already present within the university, and has been at work there even before we entered that space. Nigel Biggar's compelling argument on Christian ethics (in "Tense Consensus", in Behaving in Public: How to Do Christian Ethics) suggests that while Christians are often required to be the distinctive ethical voice in society, distinctiveness for distinctiveness' sake alone cannot be valued. Rather, he argues, Christians may find common ground with other voices outside the Church on many issues. This allows Christian academics to realise that an indication of Christ's lordship over the

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university may be found in the fact that much of our research and critical thinking may echo other voices that are not part of the 'Christian' community. God's effort in reconciling humanity to Himself, then, is not only limited to Christians in the university.

We struggled particularly with the issue of degrees in the humanities being valued (or devalued) according to the economic returns they could command. The humanities are often viewed as unprofitable and impractical, and are regularly accused of not equipping degree-holders with skills that are 'employable' or 'marketable', a problem that manifests itself (at least partially) in the record number of unemployed graduates in Sri Lanka. Perhaps one way to approach this issue is to begin to raise questions about the unchallenged primacy afforded to the free market model of valuing goods and services, and the assumptions that its functions are inherently beneficial. What would our perspective of knowledge be if profit-motivation was not so overwhelming an actor in attaching values to things? And how, if it does, does profitability undermine the intrinsic value of an area of study?

We were also required to think about the larger question of the importance of university, and this led to many interesting perspectives on the role of universities. Many recognised the university as a place where one would come into contact with people who represented diverse backgrounds and views in society. If education and truth-seeking were truly to be embraced within this space, then we would actively seek out those who would challenge us and draw attention to our biases, while engaging honestly and openly with their beliefs, narratives, and experiences.

University would then be a place where minds of diverse leanings found commonality in their pursuit of truth. This could arguably be the ideal reason why inter-disciplinary study should be supported within the Sri Lankan university system which is strictly divided, labelled and stratified.

Another perspective offered was the need to see university as the place which envisions ideas that will push society's progress beyond the immediate future. Staff and students should ideally recognise the need to conceptualise their society's trajectory and its goals as part of the university's mission to explore and push the boundaries of knowledge.

"WHAT WOULD OUR PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWLEDGE BE IF PROFIT-MOTIVATION WAS NOT SO OVERWHELMING AN ACTOR IN ATTACHING VALUES TO THINGS? AND HOW, IF IT DOES, DOES PROFITABILITY UNDERMINE THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF AN AREA OF STUDY?"

Offering students an alternate and bigger vision for their lives could be seen as a way to oppose students viewing their degrees solely as a means of employability and security in life. A very real concern remains, however. How do we expect students whose families depend entirely on their employability for existence to appreciate a 'bigger' vision of education that may not guarantee the daily survival of the loved ones who depend on them? How do we attract students to see the need for education beyond the simple motive of profitability, while not undermining those whose struggle to support their families is real?

These questions and struggles will continue to demand our attention as Christians in academia, and will need constant negotiation and nuanced comprehension of the factors that lead to these issues. I believe, however, that with minds open to God's vision for the world, we are uniquely equipped to appreciate the importance of partnering in the reconciliation of the university to Him.



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**Jaffna University
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Peradeniya Chapel Carol Service



Eastern University Christmas Program

STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: IS THERE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

PROF PRIYAN DIAS

Although I am an academic in a state university, I will declare at the outset that this is not an article against private universities. In fact, one of the benefits of private universities is that it forces state universities to do better. I am however saying that there is no level playing field between the state and private universities, to the detriment of the former. This is due to deficiencies in the state 'system' itself (including higher education planning and student admission); in other words, we are shooting ourselves in our collective foot. I will confine myself to three glaring disadvantages that we have foisted upon ourselves.

Delays in university admission

No doubt much ink has been silt over this issue, but I would like to frame it afresh. The local GCE (A-level) exam is itself now held 8 months after it used to be 40 years ago, not by design but by default. I must commend the Department of Examinations for releasing results within 4 months after the examination, much quicker than they used to 40 years ago. But the beneficiaries of this early release are precisely the private universities. Applications are called by private universities for courses to commence in the February following the previous August A-level exam. The corresponding start date for state sector

universities is typically the following February – a year’s delay!!

The better state universities survive on reputation. My Department alone sends on average one graduate every year to Cambridge University on fully funded PhD scholarships; and many others to top universities around the world. We would like to think that it is our efforts alone that create this statistic. But cold reason tells me that the statistic also depends on our intake quality. We get the best students because of our reputation; those students help us to maintain our reputation. It is a virtuous cycle. If students and parents get impatient at our delays, they may not come to us, but rather choose the private university. The state ‘system’ will have shot itself in the foot.

Many and varied reasons and excuses, including those for failed solutions, have been trotted out as to why the time to admission cannot be shortened. In my opinion, state universities should start courses for freshmen in May, soon after the New Year holidays, for students who have sat exams the previous August. This has to be the overriding goal, with all other considerations being adjusted to achieve it. For example, the entire re-scrutiny process may have to be scrapped, in addition to other time saving measures. Greater investment should be made in the first correction process. One never hears of re-scrutiny in the London A-level exams, no doubt because of public confidence. The public must be spoken to and won over about our own proposals; else there may be lawsuits. But this is something that must be done in the next year or two.

Location of state universities

This is a thorny issue that might earn me the ire of some academic colleagues. Sri Lanka is a small country that does not need a university in every district, leave aside province. In fact the whole idea of a university is that it is a melting pot, inclusive of geographical diversity. Apart from that we have a primate city in Colombo, typical of post colonial countries - a primate city is one whose population is overwhelming

greater than every other city in the country. If the Western Province megapolis is established (about which I have my own reservations), then it will be even better resourced relative to the rest of the country than now. The starting of state universities outside the province (or even Colombo District) will be suicidal. Whatever funding is given to start them, finding academics to serve there will be extremely difficult, because the best education and health facilities will be in and around Colombo. It is no surprise therefore that all private universi-

“UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE LOCATED IN THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS LOCATIONS, WITH STUDENTS FROM ALL GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS HAVING ACCESS TO THEM.”

ties are in the C o l o m b o District. Providing university education is not like providing transport or health or even primary & secondary school services – clearly here the state has to locate such services in all parts of the country. But universities should be located in the most advantageous locations, with students from all geographical areas having access to them.

Every university in and around Colombo is doing well academically. The others - even Jaffna, Ruhuna and Jennings’ beloved Peradeniya to some extent – are probably struggling because of their location. This is because it is difficult to change the ground reality of Colombo being a primate city. Have we thought about this in our university location planning? Starting an engineering faculty at Sri Jayawardenapura University (on the cards, I understand) is an excellent recognition of this reality. If there are three state medical faculties in and around Colombo, why is there currently only one state engineering faculty (at Moratuwa)? The engineering faculty at South Eastern University in Oluvil is a disaster; the students are on the streets now, pleading not only for themselves as I understand, but also to scrap any further student intake to Oluvil.

How about medical schools? The contentious new private medical college (located close

to Colombo once again) may probably be better than those at Rajarata and even Eastern Universities. Is there a plan to start a medical faculty at Kuliyaipitiya? Is this wise in the above context? Why didn't the powers that be persuade Moratuwa University to start one (with Panadura upgraded to a teaching hospital)? So, we start these professional courses in difficult to resource areas, and then subject the graduates to competition from the better resourced private university graduates. Is this a level playing field? Who has created the discrepancy? Will any private engineering or medical school be located in Mihintale' or Oluvil? I have emphasized professional courses, not because I think any less of others. But such courses have to meet the exacting requirements of accrediting bodies, who will not accredit deficient programmes.

The AR & FR

Bureaucratic regulations (e.g. Administrative Regulations & Financial Regulations) are the bane of state university academics, and have been for some time. The difference now is that we have to compete with academics in private institutions, who do not have such regulations applied in rote fashion. Procurement facilitation is a dire necessity because there are many new processes and activities that require modern financial instruments. Some software and equipment required for teaching and research for example can only be purchased by credit card.

Overseas visits need to be made for research collaboration. Postgraduate students need to have overseas placements and exposure. At times, we need to have the input of a foreign collaborator, whose travel and subsistence need to be met. And even though state university academics may have approved research or other budgets within which the above expenditures could fall, the above so called 'unusual' procurements are almost impossible to make, and there are very strict guidelines as to what expenditures are allowed or not.

The usual reason given is that state universi-

ties are run on public funds, and that these funds must be used with extreme care. It is a mantra that is "penny wise, pound foolish". There is considerable investment that the state already makes on its universities. Allowing these investments to be used in the ways that academics want to - of course within reasonable and modern institutional guidelines, checks and balances - will bring much more return on those investments than at present. When talking to senior university administrators, we sometimes hear arguments like this: "Of course University X or Faculty Y have good reputations and will be able to use the requested freedoms in spending; but there are many faculties and universities who will abuse such freedom; therefore we cannot allow anyone in the state system to enjoy them." This is governance based on the lowest common denominator; a recipe' for mediocrity; and another case of shooting ourselves in the foot.

Conclusion

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that private universities are better than state universities. The latter (especially the more established ones) have built enviable reputations, attract the best students, and send graduates to the most prestigious of destinations. The creation of private universities, and the consequent competition, is however a watershed. If we use the challenges they pose to improve the state system, everyone

"IF WE DO NOT IMPROVE, BUT MERELY SEEK A 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' SCENARIO, THE STATE SYSTEM COULD BECOME SECOND BEST OR EVEN THIRD RATE."

will benefit. If we do not improve, but merely seek a 'business as usual' scenario, the state system could become second best or even third rate. This is a challenge for university administrators. Such administrators (and even academics) are obligated to seek the prosperity of the state system. However, in many cases their kith and kin may be in the private system; they may also be getting paid to lecture at private universities. If we in the state system do not put our house in order and stop shooting ourselves in the foot, independent observers may begin to wonder whether those in charge of the state system are in fact deliberately undermining it, because of the above conflicts of interest.

பல்கலைக்கழகத்திற்கான கிறிஸ்தவனின் அழைப்பும் ஆழமான ஈடுபாடும்

யோ. பகீரதன்

உலகில் பல சமயங்களும், தத்துவங்களும் நாம் வாழும் உலகம் தீமையானது என்றும் இவ்வுலகத்துடனான ஈடுபாடுகள் தவிர்க்கப்பட வேண்டியதாகவும் போதிக்கின்றன. இத் தீமையான உலகினை விட்டு விலகியிருத்தல் அல்லது இதிலிருந்து விடுதலை பெறுதலே ஒரு மனிதன் முத்தி அடைவதற்கான வழி என விதந்துரைக்கின்றன. ஆனால் வேதாகமம் நாம் இறைவனை அடைவதற்கு அல்லது இறைவனுடைய ராஜ்ஜியத்திலே சேர்வதற்கு நாம் செய்யும் பணியினைக் கைவிடுவதனையோ அல்லது எமது குடும்பத்தினைப் பிரிந்து தனித்து வாழ்வதையோ இல்லாவிடில் இவ்வுலகினை விட்டு ஒதுங்கியிருப்பதையோ நிபந்தனைகளாகக் கூறவில்லை. மாறாக இறைவன் எமக்குத் தந்தவைகள் மீது அன்போடும் கரிசனையோடும் ஆழமாக ஈடுபடுவதையே எம்மிடம் எதிர்பார்க்கின்றது. இதுவே இறைவனால் எமக்கு கொடுக்கப்பட்ட அழைப்பாகவும் உக்கிராணத்துவமாகவும் கருதப்படுகின்றது. ஆகவே தொடர்ந்து வாசிப்பதற்கு முன்பதாக ஒரு கிறிஸ்தவனைப் பரிசுத்தமாக்குவது அல்லது கடவுளிடம் கிட்டிச் சேர்ப்பது எதுவெனில் எமக்குத் தரப்பட்ட சாதாரணமான காரியங்களை சரிவர செய்வதும் அவைகள் மீதான எமது ஆழமான ஈடுபாடுமே என்பதைப் புரிந்துகொள்ளுதல் அவசியமாகும்.

“University Engagement” என்ற ஆங்கில சொற்பதம் பல்கலைக்கழக ஊழியத்திலே புதியதோர் பரிணாம வளர்ச்சியாகக் காணப்படுகின்றது. இங்கு “Engagement” என்ற ஆங்கிலப் பதத்திற்கு பல்வேறு தமிழ் அர்த்தங்கள் காணப்பட்டாலும் நம் மனதிலே உடனடியாகத் தோன்றுவது “நிச்சயதார்த்தம்” அல்லது “நிச்சயித்தல்” போன்ற தமிழ் அர்த்தங்களே. ஆம்! இதுவோர் ஆழமான ஈடுபாட்டினையும், உறவினையும், அர்ப்பணிப்பினையும் குறிக்கின்றது. அதேபோலவே பல்கலைக்கழகத்துடனான ஒரு கிறிஸ்தவனின் ஆழமான உறவினையும், அர்ப்பணிப்பினையும் ஈடுபாட்டினையும் குறிப்பதாக

“University Engagement” என்ற ஆங்கிலப் பதம் அமைகிறது.

பலர் கிறிஸ்தவத்தினை ஞாயிறு பாடசாலைக்குள் மட்டுப்படுத்திவிட்டனர். இதனால் இது புத்திஜீவிகளுக்குரிய ஒன்றாகக் கருதப்படுவதில்லை. எமது கிறிஸ்தவ விசுவாசத்திற்கும், நாம் பணி செய்யும் துறைக்கும் இடையிலே எந்தவோர் தொடர்பினையும் நாம் கொண்டிருப்பதில்லை. நாம் பணி செய்யும் துறையினை வெறும் உலகப் பிரகாரமானதாகவும், இதற்கும் எனது கிறிஸ்தவ விசுவாசத்திற்கும் தொடர்பேதும் இல்லையென சிந்திப்பது எமது பணியினை ஒரு சமையாகக் கருத வழி வகுப்பதுடன், அதை அலட்சியத்துடன் செய்யத் தூண்டுகின்றது. இம் மனநிலை நமது துறையிலோ அல்லது பணியிலோ எமது ஈடுபாட்டினை வெகுவாகக் குறைத்து, எமது வாழ்நாளிலே பெருமளவிலான நேரம் செலவழிக்கப்படும் விடயம் ஒரு அர்த்தமற்றதாகவும் வெறுமையானதாகவும், இறைவனுடைய பார்வையிலே எந்தவோர் பெறுமதியற்றதாகவும் ஆக்கிவிடுகின்றது. இதுவோர் தவறான எண்ணக்கருவாக காணப்படுகின்ற போதும் இன்று பல கிறிஸ்தவர்களின் சிந்தனை இவ்விதம் அமைந்திருப்பது உண்மையே. இதுவே நமது துறைகளிலோ அல்லது பணிகளிலோ நாம் ஆழமான ஒரு ஈடுபாட்டினை மேற்கொள்ளமுடியாமல் இருப்பதற்கான அடிப்படைக் காரணமாகும்.

“உலகமெங்கும் போங்கள்” என்பதே இயேசுக்கிறிஸ்துவின் மாபெரும் கட்டளை. இங்கு “உலகமெங்கும் என்பதற்குள் பல்கலைக்கழகங்களும் அடங்குகின்றன. இயேசுக்கிறிஸ்துவின் ஆளுகை இப்பூமி மீது வருவதே தேவனுடைய இராஜ்ஜியம். எனவே பல்கலைக்கழகங்களுக்குள் அவருடைய கர்த்தத்துவத்தினையும், ஆளுகையையும் கொண்டுவரும்படியே பல்கலைக்கழகங்களில் உள்ள கிறிஸ்தவர்களாகிய நாம் அழைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளோம். பல்கலைக்கழக ஊழியம் தனித்து மாணவர்களுக்கு மட்டுமான

ஒன்றாகக் கருதப்படாமல் முதுநிலைப்பட்டப்படிப்பு ஆய்வாளர்கள், சிரேஸ்ட விரிவுரையாளர்கள், பேராசிரியர்கள் மற்றும் பல்வேறு நிலைகளில் உள்ள பல்கலைக்கழக ஊழியர்கள் போன்ற அனைவராலும் இணைந்து ஆற்றப்பட வேண்டியதொன்றாகும்.

பல்கலைக்கழகத்துடன் நாமோர் ஆழமான, அர்த்தமுள்ள ஈடுபாட்டினை மேற்கொள்வதற்கு பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவர்களின் மனநிலைகளையும், அவர்களின் இலட்சியங்கள் அல்லது இலக்குகள் என்ன என்பதையும், இவர்களின் வாழ்க்கைக் கோலம் பல்கலைக்கழகத்திலே எவ்விதம் அமைகிறது என்பதையும் நாம் கண்டறிய வேண்டும். நான் சந்தித்த பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவர்கள் எதிர்கொள்ளும் பொதுவான பிரச்சனைகள், மனநிலைகள் போன்றவற்றினை பின்வருமாறு பட்டியலிடலாம்.

- சுயநலக் கலாச்சாரம் (Selfie culture / You only live once)
- உடனடியான சந்தோஷங்களுக்கு முன்னுரிமை கொடுத்தல்.
- அழுத்தங்களை எதிர்கொள்ளாதலும் ஓய்வின்மையும்
- ஆரோக்கியமற்ற தீர்மானங்களை எடுத்தல் (சரியான வழிநடத்தல் அற்ற நிலை)
- போட்டி மனப்பாண்மை
- குறைந்த உணர்வு ரீதியான உறுதிப்பாடு.
- எதைக் குறித்தும் கவலையற்ற நிலை அல்லது கரிசனையற்ற நிலை.
- கடைப்பாடுகள் அல்லது கட்டுப்பாடுகள் அற்ற ஓர் மனநிலை
- இலத்திரனியல் சாதனங்கள் மீதான மோகம்.
- களியாட்டங்களில் அதிக ஆர்வம் (குரடெழை-பை)
- தமது விருப்புக்களுக்கும், சௌகரியத்திற்கும் ஏற்ப குழுக்களாகப் பிரிந்திருத்தல்.
- சமூக வலைத்தளங்களில் பரபரப்பாக இருத்தல்.
- மதுபானம், போதைவஸ்து, புகைத்தல், ஆபாசம்.
- அர்பணிப்பற்ற உறவுகள்
- பாகுபாடு அல்லது வேற்றுமை காண்பித்தல் (இனம், மொழி, பால்)

• தற்கொலைக்கான மனநிலை

மேற்படி பட்டியலிலே நமது இலங்கைப் பல்கலைக்கழகங்களில் உள்ள மாணவர்களின் சில பொதுவான மனநிலைகளையும் பிரச்சனைகளையும் பார்த்தோம். இத்தகைய மனநிலைகள் அவர்களை எதிர்காலத்திலே எவ்விதமான பிரணைகள் ஆக்கப்போகின்றது என்பதை குறித்து நாம் சிந்திக்க வேண்டும்.

முதலில் இவர்கள் பல்கலைக்கழகக் கல்வியை எவ்விதம் நோக்குகின்றனர் என்பதை அவதானித்தால் இவர்களின் முக்கிய இலக்காக அமைவது பரீட்சையில் சித்தியடைவதே. அதாவது ஒரு காரியம் தவறு என்று தெரிந்திருந்தாலும் அக்காரியத்தினை நாம் எழுதினால் பரீட்சையில் சரி தீயடைவோம் என்றால் நாம் அதைத் தவறு என்று தெரிந்தும்

“பலர் கிறிஸ்தவத்தினை ஞாயிறு பாடசாலைக்குள் மட்டுப்படுத்திவிட்டனர். இதனால் இது புத்திஜீவிகளுக்குரிய ஒன்றாகக் கருதப்படுவதில்லை”

அதை எழுதத் தயாராக இருக்கிறோம். ஏனெனில் எமது கற்றுக்கொள்ளுதல் பரீட்சையை மையமாகக் கொண்டதேயன்றி அதற்கு மேல் நாம் சிந்திப்பதற்கு வழிவகுப்பதில்லை. சுருங்கக் கூறின் பல்கலைக்கல்வியும் வெறும் வகுப்பறைக் கல்வியாகவே காணப்படுகிறது. இதனால் மாணவர்களுக்கு தமது துறை குறித்து எந்தவோர் ஆர்வமோ அக்கறையோ காணப்படுவதில்லை.

இரண்டாவது, பல்கலைக்கழகக் கல்வி ஒரு தொழிலைப் பெறுவதற்கான ஊடகமாக மாத்திரமே கருதப்படுகின்றது. அதற்கு மேல் நாம் சிந்திப்பதில்லை. மாணவர்களின் பாடத்தொடர்புகள் கூட அவர்களின் விருப்பத்தினையும், தாலந்துகளையும் அடிப்படையாகக் கொண்டமையாது, மாறாக எதிர்காலத்தில் நல்லதோர் தொழிலையும் வருமானத்தினையும் பெறுவதை மாத்திரம் அடிப்படையாகக் கொண்டமைகிறது.

மூன்றாவது, பல்கலைக்கல்வி பாடசாலைக் கல்வியை ஒத்ததல்ல. இதுவோர் ஆய்வுக் கல்வியாகும். இங்கு மாணவர்களின் ஆய்வுகள் எத்தகைய விதத்திலே புதிய உண்மைகளை

கண்டறிவதாக அல்லது நமது சமூகத்திற்கும் நாட்டிற்கும் நன்மை பயப்பதாக அமைகிறது என்பதும் கேள்விக்குரிய ஒன்றே. தகுதி அல்லது தராதரம் என்பது வெறுமனவே ஒரு சான்றிதலுக்கு அடக்கப்படுகின்றது. அறிவு என்பது எமக்கு என்ன தெரியும் என்ற அளவு கோலால் அளவிடப்படுகின்றதேயன்றி நமக்கு தெரிந்தவற்றினை எவ்விதம் சிறந்த முறையில் பயன்படுத்தலாம் என்பது குறித்து சிந்திக்கப்படுவதில்லை. எனவே இவற்றினை நாம் தொகுத்து நோக்கும் போது பல்கலைக்கல்வி என்பதற்கு ஒரு புதிய தரிசனம் அவசியமானதாக அமைவதை நாம் காணலாம். இதிலே கிறிஸ்தவர்களின் பங்கு என்ன? ஏனெனில் இவ்விதமான கல்வி குறித்த மனநிலைகள் சமூகத்திலே சுயநலம் மிக்கதும் வெறும் பணமோகம் கொண்டவர்களையும், பதவிகளுக்காகப் போராடுகிறவர்களையும், சமூகத்திலே பிரிவினைகளையும் வேறுபாடுகளையும் ஏற்படுத்தக்கூடிய தலைவர்களைத்தான் உருவாக்குகின்றது. இந்நிலை மாறுவதற்கு கிறிஸ்தவர்களின் பங்களிப்பும், பல்கலைக்கழகத்துடனான ஒரு ஆழமான அர்த்தமுள்ள ஈடுபாடும் அவசியமானதாகும்.

மாணவர்கள் எதிர்நோக்கும் பிரச்சனைகளில் முக்கியமானவையாகவே மதுபானம், போதைவஸ்து, புகைத்தல், தற்கொலைக்கான மனநிலை போன்றவை அமைகின்றன. எனவே இத்தகைய காரியங்களிலே ஒரு விழிப்புணர்வினை ஏற்படுத்தும்படிக்கு எமது மாணவ ஐக்கியங்களால் இது குறித்த விழிப்புணர்வு கருத்தரங்கினை எமது பல்கலைக்கழகங்களில் ஒழுங்குபடுத்தமுடியும். இதனூடாக இத்தகைய தீமையான பழக்கங்களுக்கு அடிமையானவர்களை மீட்டுக்கொள்வதற்கான ஒரு ஆரம்பப் படிநிலையை எம்மால் மேற்கொள்ளமுடியும்.

மாணவர்கள் எப்போதும் குழுவாக செயற்படுவதில் ஆர்வமுள்ளவர்களாகக் காணப்படுகின்றனர். இவர்கள் படைப்பாற்றல் மிக்கவர்களாக இருப்பதுடன், எப்போதும் நல்லவிடயங்களை செய்வதற்கான ஊக்கத்தினையும், உற்சாகத்தினையும் நாம் அளிக்கும்போது அதைசெய்யக் கூடியவர்கள். எனவே பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் சுத்தமற்ற ஒரு பகுதியை இனங்கண்டு அப்பகுதியிலே சுத்திகரிப்பு பணிசெய்பவர்களுடன் இணைந்து நாம் சுத்தம்

செய்யலாம். இது எமது பல்கலைக்கழகத்தினை நாம் நேசிக்கிறோம் என்பதனையும் அதன் சுத்தத்தினை விரும்புகிறோம் என்பதனையும் பிரதிபலிப்பதாக அமையலாம். எமது கடந்த காலங்களிலே ஏற்பட்ட இயற்கை அனர்த்தங்களில் பாதிக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுக்கு எவ்விதம் நாம் இணைந்து பணி செய்தோம் என்பது இதற்கு நல்ல உதாரணங்கள் ஆகும். ஏனெனில் கடவுள் இல்லையெனக் கூறும் நாஸ்திகர்கள் கூட மற்றவர்களுக்கு நன்மை செய்வதில் அதிக ஆர்வமுடையவர்களாக இருக்கின்றனர். எனவே இத்தகைய செயற்பாடுகள் நாம் பல்கலைக்கழகத்திலே ஆழமான உறவிலே ஈடுபட உதவி புரிகிறது.

பல்கலைக்கழகத்திற்கு புதிதாக வருகின்ற முதலாண்டு மாணவர்களில் வெளிமாவட்டங்களைச் சேர்ந்தவர்கள் முதல் இரண்டு அல்லது மூன்று மாதங்கள் பல்வேறு வகையான சிரமங்களை எதிர்கொள்கின்றனர். உதாரணமாக மொழிப் பிரச்சனை, தங்குமிடப் பிரச்சனை, புதிய இடத்தினைப் பழக்கப்படுத்திக் கொள்வதில் உள்ள சிரமங்கள் என பல்வேறு வகையான பிரச்சனைகளை எதிர் கொள்கின்றனர். இவ்வாறான மாணவர்களைக் கருத்திலே கொண்டு இவர்களை இலகுவாக வழிப்படுத்தும் வகையிலே எமது மாணவ ஐக்கியங்களினால் சில செயற்பாடுகளைச் செய்ய முடியும்.

மேற்படி செயற்பாடுகளை நாம் தனித்துத் தான் செய்யவேண்டும் என்பதில்லை. ஏற்கனவே இத்தகைய செயற்பாடுகளை செய்கின்ற பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவ ஒன்றியம் போன்ற அமைப்புகள் காணப்படுகின்றன. நாம் இவ்வாறான அமைப்புகளை இனங்கண்டு அவர்களோடு இணைந்து செயற்பட முடியும். இவ்வாறான செயற்பாடுகள் மற்றைய மாணவர்களோடு நாம் நல்லதோர் உறவினை கட்டியெழுப்ப வழி அமைக்கின்றது. இவ்விதமாக பல்கலைக்கழகத்திலே கற்கின்ற மாணவர்கள், பணிபுரியும் ஊழியர்கள் இத்தகைய செயற்பாட்டினை ஒரு தரிசனமாகவும் அழைப்பாகவும் எடுத்து செயற்படும்போது எமது பல்கலைக்கழகங்களின் இருண்ட பகுதிகள் ஒளி பெறும்.

FORCES THAT SHAPE OUR WORKPLACES

PROF PRIYAN DIAS REFLECTS ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA

What is this university particularly noted for?

Moratuwa University is known for its technology based courses. These are professionally oriented courses, meaning that everyone knows what kind of job they will eventually be doing when they come in, unlike students in Arts and Science faculties.

What are the values that the university explicitly acknowledges? What values do you think are implicit but rarely acknowledged?

Values such as innovation, creativity, discipline and hard work are explicitly acknowledged. Implicit values, the ones that are not declared, include an interest in making students “well-behaved members of society”. While this has positive aspects to it, the entire idea could be a negative one as well – with the administration not wanting students to challenge the system and so on. It is no wonder that very few engineers are involved in civil society movements, although there are a few laudable exceptions.

What are the popular “ideologies” (ways of looking at the world) at Moratuwa University?

First, there is a business-orientation here, an orientation towards the industry. While there are some students who are socially radical, many seem to have bought into the idea of being part of the commercial world.

Also, perhaps typical in a technology-based university, is the idea that technology can solve all problems – that anything can be fixed, much like a crack in a structure or leak in a tap can. Related to this is the idea of pragmatism – that you must do what works and not necessarily what’s right. However, this is not to say that the importance of things like personal counselling of students with problems isn’t acknowledged.

Another interesting idea that is widespread at Moratuwa and probably all state universities relates to free education. Free education gives people a sense of entitlement – it makes them believe that they are entitled to enter university

and to a job as well – that “we have a right to these things”. This even extends to the belief that they have an automatic right to a job over people who qualified elsewhere, such as in foreign universities. But, along with this sense of entitlement, there is also a sense among students that “we are the best” and “who can challenge us?” So there is this tension between two ideas – on the one hand that we are the best, but also that we need to be specially favoured.

I’ve also noticed a sense of hubris, of pride - the idea that “Sri Lankans can.” This is not bad in itself, but can lead to recklessness. There is also this feeling that we were technologically smart at a certain point in our ancient history and able to demonstrate that; and that we are smart now too.

It’s interesting that even at a technology-based university, the ideology of scientific naturalism [the view that science can tell us everything about reality] is not widespread. Most staff and students are religious in their way, with a lot of devotion in whatever religion they subscribe to. Of course there are exceptions, but most would believe, for example, in the power of a Bodhi Pooja. I’ve even noticed this among post-graduate students to whom I teach a course on the Philosophy of Science. Whenever a discussion on the philosophy of mind comes up, many of them will make a reference to what the Buddha said about it and so on. So religion has influenced students quite a bit. Scientific naturalism doesn’t have free rein.

One also finds Sinhala-Buddhist undertones at the university and once again probably at all state universities. There is a large Buddha statue in the middle of the campus, and I think a roster operates for the offering of flowers. It seems that of the other religions, Christian values are also respected, and sometimes the Buddha and Jesus are quoted together when appealing to students’ better natures.

(Continued on page 22)

GOD IN MY LIFE

“Being an amazing provider... a comforter... a sounding board for my complaints... when he lifts all burdens off my mind.”

“I see God in my personal life when taking decisions... and in times when I feel confused and lost.”

“In my quiet times – when I pray and read the Bible... When I worship God on my own... When I face accidents... In my happiness.”

“I see him in confronting me with my sinfulness, and in helping me overcome it.”

“In answers to prayer for more opportunities to serve him with my gifts”

“God has both opened and closed doors in my life. I’m particularly grateful for the doors he has closed which I now see to be a great blessing.”

GOD IS AT WORK EVERYWHERE

WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN HIM TODAY?

GOD IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

“The love and kindness shown to us by our non-Christian domestic helper – her generosity despite her poverty and illiteracy.”

“At parties! I never thought before today that he could be there as well!”

“Even amidst situations of widely accepted wrongs – there were people to stand up against it.”

“In jokes and fun times.”

“In the vendor who got into my bus today. There was a flash of realization that I was looking at someone made in the likeness of God.”

GOD AT UNIVERSITY

“In how I have not been allowed to settle into a routine track of uni work. I have had to rethink why I want to follow what I think is the ‘best’ career option.”

“Law faculty had several bureaucratic issues which got political and dirty...In an unexpected turn of events they got partially resolved. Everything’s not okay, but it’s in far better hands now.”

“God’s faithfulness – keeping an active witness to himself at UCCF over the years... God is also faithful in Job-like contexts on other campuses too – places where a witness to him was once active but no longer exists.”

“When certain lecturers hold a certain stance over something... when my studies give meaning to my life.”

“In Christian gatherings.”

“In courageous women undergraduates willing to break stereotypes about a woman’s role/place in the university hierarchy.”

“January 8, 2015.”

“Random acts of humanness in people.”

“In times of national/ natural calamity people of every ethnicity come together in unity to help the afflicted.”

GOD IN THE LIFE OF OUR COUNTRY

“Transitional justice advocacy in Sri Lanka was taboo but lately the tides have changed and there is room for people to speak up.”

“God is at work in the greater social/political awareness that he has brought about in the people of Sri Lanka.”

“Small pockets of people working towards improving the lot of others.”

මා ප්‍රතිචාර දැක්වූයේ මෙයටයි... ඩිලංකා ප්‍රනාන්දු

මැවිල්ලේ මුදුන් මල්කඩ වන මනුෂ්‍යයාට ජීවිතයේ අත්දැකිය හැකි උතුම්ම දෙය කුමක්ද? මැවිල්ලේ නිර්මාතෘ තමන් වෙනුවෙන් සුදානම් කළා වූ අනගි සැලැස්මට ඇතුළු වීම නොවේද? ඒදුන් උයනේදී ගිලිහුනු දේව සබඳතාවය හා බිඳවැටුණු අනෙකුත් සම්බන්ධතා සවි කිරීමට ඉඩ හැරීම නොවේද?

“ඔබේ හඳුවනේ දොර විවෘත කර යේසුස්වහන්සේට ඇතුළු වීමට ඉඩ හරින්න” කියා ඔබ වෙත යමෙක් යම් දිනක ආරාධනාවක් කර තිබේද? ඔබ ඊට ප්‍රතිචාර දැක්වූයේ කෙසේද? ක්‍රිස්තුස්වහන්සේට ඔබේ හඳුවනට ඇතුළු වන්නට ආරාධනා කළා නම්, දැන් උන්වහන්සේ ඔබේ හඳුවනේ රජ කරන බව ඔබ විශ්වාස කරන්නේද?

ඔබ මෙසේ ප්‍රතිචාර දක්වා ඇත්තේ කෙබඳු ආරාධනයකටද? ඔබ ඇතුළු වී ඇත්තේ මහා විශාල සැලැස්මකටයි. ඔබ දැන් සහභාගිකම් දරන්නේත්, පංගුකාර වී ඇත්තේත් මහා විශාල ක්‍රියාවලියකටයි. ඒදුන් උයනෙහි සිදු වූ මුල් පාපය කරණාකොටගෙන ඇති වූ ප්‍රතිඵල, පුද්ගලිකව මට පමණක් බලනොපාන අතර,

එය කරණාකොටගෙන මුළු මනුෂ්‍ය සංහතියම, මුළු මැවිල්ලම දේව මහිමයෙන් හීන වී සිටියි. තහනම් ගසේ ගෙඩි කෑමෙන් දෙවියන්වහන්සේ තමන්ට මෙන්ම මුළු ලෝකය වෙනුවෙන්ම සැලසුම් කළ යහපත් සැලැස්ම මිනිසා ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කරන ලදී.

එබැවින් මිනිසා හා දෙවියන්වහන්සේ අතරද, මිනිසා සහ මිනිසා අතරද, මිනිසා සහ සොබාදහම අතරද පැවති සම්බන්ධතා පළුදු විය. මුල් පාපයේ ප්‍රතිඵල මෙසේ සෑම අංශයකටම ව්‍යාප්තව ඇත පාපය සහ පාපයේ අතුරු ඵල මෙතරම් විශාල නම්, ව්‍යාප්තිය මෙතරම් පුළුල් නම්, ඒ වෙනුවෙන් දෙවියන්වහන්සේ ගෙනා විසඳුමද

සම්පූර්ණ සෑහෙන විසඳුමක් විය යුතුය. දෙවියන්වහන්සේම මනුෂ්‍යයකු ලෙස මුළු මැවිල්ල වෙනුවෙන් පූජාවක් වූ සේක. “කුරුසිය” දුඬුවම නෝරාගෙන ශරීරය, රුධිරය මුළු ලෝකය උදෙසාම වැගිරුවේ සම්පූර්ණ සමාජන සෑහෙන පූජාවක් ලෙසින්ය. නැවත තුන්වැනි දා උන්වහන වූයේ අළුත් ශරීරයක් ඇතිවය. ඒ කරණාකොටගෙන මුළු මැවිල්ලම අළුත් කරන්නට (කොලොස්සි 1:20) දෙවියන්වහන්සේ සතුටු වූ සේක.

අප එකිනෙකා පුද්ගලිකව ප්‍රතිචාර දක්වන්නේ මෙම පූජාව කරණාකොටගෙන දෙවියන්වහන්සේ විශ්වය තුළ කරන්නාවූ අතිවිශාල සමගි කිරීමේ කාර්යයටය. යේසුස්වහන්සේ තම මෙහෙය ආරම්භ කළේ, “කාලය සම්පූර්ණ විය, දෙවියන්වහන්සේගේ රාජ්‍යය සම්පය. පසුතැවිලි වී, ශුභාරංචිය අදහාගන්න” යනුවෙන් ප්‍රකාශ කරමිනි. දේව රාජ්‍යය නම් දෙවියන්වහන්සේගේ (ආධිපත්‍යය) රජකිරීම පවතින තත්වයයි. ඊට ඇතුළුවීමේ මාර්ගය මනස්ථාපනයයි. යේසුස්වහන්සේගේ මෙහෙයේ මූලික අරමුණ වූයේ දේව රාජ්‍යය ස්ථාපිත කිරීමයි. එයට සාක්ෂි

“යේසුස්වහන්සේගේ මෙහෙයේ මූලික අරමුණ වූයේ දේව රාජ්‍යය ස්ථාපිත කිරීමයි. එයට සාක්ෂි දරන්නේ උන්වහන්සේගේ ගෝලකමට ඇතුළු වන සෙනඟගෙන් යුත් සභාවයි.”

දරන්නේ උන්වහන්සේගේ ගෝලකමට ඇතුළු වන සෙනඟගෙන් යුත් සභාවයි. “තම ජීවිතයේ ස්වාමිත්වය” යේසුස්වහන්සේට දෙමින් උන්වහන්සේගේ රජ කමටත්, පාලනයටත්, යටත්ව කීකරු වන ජනතාවගෙන් “සභාව” සමන්විත වේ. අද ඔබත් මමත් ඇතුළු වී ඇත්තේ මේ දේව රාජ්‍යයේ චටිනාකම් හා පණිවිඩය, “සුභාරංචිය” තම ජීවිතාදර්ශයෙන් පෙන්වීමේ

නියෝගයට කීකරු වූ සභාවේ පංගුකාරයන් වීමටයි.

යේසුස්වහන්සේ මගේ හඳුවනේ රජකරන බැවින් දෙවිදුන් හා මා සමගිව සිටියි. එය මට ඇතිද? දෙවිදුන් සමඟ සමගිතාවයට ඇතුළත් වූණු මා කැඳවා ඇත්තේ එය කරණාකොටගෙන තවත් සමගි කිරීමේ සේවයකටමයි. මා අවට සිටින

මනුෂ්‍යයන් තමාම තමන් හා සමගි වීමටත්, දෙවිදුන් හා සමගි වීමටත්, තම සහකාර සහෝදරයන් හා සමගි වීමටත්, ඔවුන්ට උපකාර කරන මැදහත් වන, එසේම සමාජය සමඟද කැඩී බිඳී ගිය සම්බන්ධතා නැවත අළුත් කිරීමටත් උපකාර කරන්නෙක් ලෙස අපව තබා ඇත. එසේ ඒ සියල්ල සමගි කරන සම්පූර්ණ වූ එකම මාර්ගය යේසුස්වහන්සේය. එකම විසඳුම උන්වහන්සේය. අප සෙවිය යුත්තේ ක්‍රිස්තුස්වහන්සේවය. අප අවට සිටින අපගේ සහකාර මනුෂ්‍යයාටද ක්‍රිස්තුස්වහන්සේ සෙවීමට උපකාර කළ යුතුයි එසේම ජීවිතයේ සියළු කාරණා දෙස ක්‍රිස්තුස්වහන්සේගේ ඇසින් බලා ඒ සියල්ල දේව රාජ්‍යයේ වටිනාකම් වන සාධාරණත්වය, සමානාත්මතාවය, මන දැකිය යුතුය. දෙවියන්වහන්සේ හා පෞද්ගලික සම්බන්ධතාවයකට ඇතුළු වන මා දැන් සෙවිය යුත්තේ, උනන්දු විය යුත්තේ, උන්වහන්සේ ලෝකය දෙස බලා උනන්දු වන කාරණා පිළිබඳවමය.

ස්වර්ගයේ වැඩ සිටින අපගේ පියාණෙනි, “ඔබගේ රාජ්‍යය ඒවා” කියා දිනපතා අසදින කිතුනුවෙකු ලෙස අපගේ ක්‍රියා කලාපය කෙබඳුද? අපි තවමත් කරදර වන්නේ “මා” හා “මා වට කොට ඇති”, “මටම අයිති”, “මටම බලපාන දේ” ගැන පමණද? මගේ යාච්ඤා කෙබඳුද? මා වටා සිටින යහළුවන් හා මා ආශ්‍රය කරන අය කවිද? මගේ රැකියා ජීවිතය, මගේ පවුල් ජීවිතය, අධ්‍යාපනික ජීවිතය, මගේ අධ්‍යාත්මික ජීවිතය, මා තවමත් දකින්නේ

එකිනෙකට වෙන්ව පවතින ජීවිත රටාවන් ලෙසද? පෙර අප මනක් කරගත් ලෙස යේසුස් වහන්සේට අපගේ හඳවන විවෘත කොට අප ඇතුළු වී ඇත්තේ දෙවියන්වහන්සේ ලෝකය තුළ ව්‍යාප්ත වෙමින් පවතින්නාවූ දේව රාජ්‍යයටය. ලෝකයේ ක්‍රමය, පිළිගැනීම්, ආර්ථික සමාජීය හා දේශපාලනික ආදී සෑම පද්ධතියක්ම දේව රාජ්‍යයේ වටිනාකම් මත ගොඩ නැගීමට අවශ්‍යය. දේව රාජ්‍යය මෙලොව පවතින සෑම අංශයක් පුරාම පැතිරෙන්නට අවශ්‍යය. යේසුස්වහන්සේද තම ක්‍රියා හා වචන තුළින් ආමන්ත්‍රණය කළේ ඉහත කී සියළුම අංශ වෙතටය. සුභාරංචි පොත් අධ්‍යයනය කිරීමේදී අපට පෙනී යන්නේ, උන්වහන්සේ කළ හාස්කම්, සුවයන් හා දේශනා සියල්ල තුළින් දේව රාජ්‍යය මිහිමත ස්ථාපිත කළ බවයි. යේසුස්වහන්සේගේ මාංශවත් වීමත් සමඟ ස්ථාපිත වූනු දේව රාජ්‍යයේ වර්ධනයට යොදා ගන්නේ අපවය. අපි හාපන පමණක් වෙමු.

දේව රාජ්‍යයේ ස්වභාවය කොයි ආකාරද? එහි දුප්පත්කම නැත, පීඩිත වූවන් නැති අසාධාරණයට පත් වූවන් නැත, පංති හේද නැති යුධ කෝලාහල, ව්‍යසන, වසංගත නැත. එය එසේ නම්, ඔබ මා මේ වසන යුගයේ අපව තබා ඇති ස්ථානයේ දේව රාජ්‍යය තව කොතෙක් දුරට පැමිණෙන්නට අවශ්‍යද? පළමුව, මා මුළුමනින්ම දේව රාජ්‍යයට විවෘතව සිටිද? මගේ ජීවිත සාක්ෂිය කුමක්ද? ඇයි මම කිතුනුවෙක් වී සිටින්නේ? දෙවියන්වහන්සේගෙන් අප ලබා ඇති ප්‍රේමයෙන් අප පිරී සිටින්නේද? ඒ ප්‍රේමයට ප්‍රතිචාර



Sushmitha Thayanandan, a recent Law graduate, attended the US mission conference, Urbana 2015, in December. Since 1946, Urbana has been a catalytic event that brings together a diverse mix of college and graduate students, recent graduates, pastors, church and ministry leaders, and exhibitors and focuses on compelling this generation to give their whole lives for God’s global mission. It was a new and wonderful experience for her to spend time worshipping God with those from around the world. She was particularly touched by the stories of those who endure faithfully despite much hostility and persecution.

URBANA



දැක්වන්නට නොඉවසිල්ලෙන් සෑම මොහොතක්ම මා ගත කරන්නේද? මා තුළින් යේසුස්වහන්සේ ප්‍රකාශ විය යුතුය. අප කටා කරන විට මනුෂ්‍ය සිත් උණු වී වෙනස් විය යුතුය. ඔබ මා ප්‍රතිචාර දක්වා ඇත්තේ මෙවන් භාරදුර කැඳවීමකටය. අප අවට සිටින මනුෂ්‍යයන් අප විසින් උනන්දු කරවනු ලබන්නේද, මෙම කැඳවීමට ප්‍රතිචාර දැක්වීමටය.



එක් සමාජයක් ලෙසය. එබැවින් අපි ශුභාරංචියට පුද්ගලිකව මෙන්ම සාමූහිකවද ප්‍රතිචාර දැක්විය යුතුයි. මුල් කිතුනු සභාව මේ සඳහා කදිම උදාහරණයකි. එබැවින් මා හඳුනාගත් දෙවිදුන්ව මගේ සහෝදරයාටත් මා හඳුන්වා දිය යුතුයි. යේසුස්වහන්සේගේ මරණය හා උන්ටානය තුළින් දෙවියන්වහන්සේ මුළු ලෝකයම තමන් වෙත සමඟ කර ගැනීමට සතුටු වූ සේක. මැවිල්ල උන්වහන්සේගෙන් වෙන් කළ

ශුභාරංචිය මටම පමණක් නොවේ. එය මටම මා අයිති කරගන්නේ නම්, එය “ආත්මාර්ථකාමී තත්වයකි”. “ශුභාරංචිය” ගෙන එන්නේ මුළු ලොවම දේව රාජ්‍යයක් වීමේ සුප්‍රවණය. ඒ දේව රාජ්‍යයේ පූර්ව රසය ලොවටම පෙන්වන්නට තබා ඇත්තේ සභාවයි. සභාව සමන්විත විය යුත්තේ තනි පුද්ගලයින් රාශියකගෙන් නොව, පුද්ගලයින් රැසකගෙන් යුත්

පාපයන්, පාපයෙහි ප්‍රතිඵලත් තවම ලෝකයෙහි රජ කරමින් පවතී. එම පාපිෂ්ඨ තත්වයන් හඳුනාගෙන ඊට එරෙහිව සභාව නැගීටිය යුතුය. ඔබ මා එම සභාවේ අවයවයන් වෙමු.

ඔබ හා මා ප්‍රතිචාර දක්වා ඇත්තේ මෙවැනි භාරදුර කැඳවීමකටය, වගකීමකටය. ඔබ මෙය සුළු කොට සිතන්නේද?



One of our staff, Kolitha Dissanayake, attended the world’s largest conference for Christian writers and publishers held in Singapore in November last year: LittWorld. Kolitha attended the writing workshop track and had this to say:

“When I listened to my brothers and sisters at LittWorld, I understood how God is using them as writers or publishers in their own (difficult) contexts. When we think about our own Christian literature in Sinhala and Tamil, it is very poor.

What is our contribution to Christian literature for our own Sri Lankan church as Christian university students and graduates or as FOCUS? I feel we have a long way to go.” May God challenge more of us to take up the task of producing quality Christian literature.

**LITTWORLD
2015**





Y. Paheerathan, one of our staff, participated in two modular courses conducted by the Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI) Bible Study Centre in Kotagiri, India in October 2015. The modules covered apologetics in a pluralist society and mission.

Commenting on his trip Paheerathan said “The program made me think broadly about university ministry and gave me an opportunity to meet people who are involved in university ministry in different ways... Overall I was encouraged and challenged by the way they do ministry in India. “



RESPONDING TO ANOTHER'S GRIEF

JASMINE OBEYESEKERE FERNANDO

I had just started my second year at a university away from home when my father was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He died three months after his diagnosis. During most of those three months, I was able to be close at hand to help because my university was closed due to student unrest. Now, in the season of the twentieth anniversary of his death, it seems fitting to share insights of the grieving process gleaned from my own. Although the cultural environment may differ, I believe there are universal elements of grief and the way we respond to it. My hope is that my own experience may help others respond in a more thoughtful and compassionate way to those in their own lives who are grieving.

Remember that grieving begins before death

In the case of a terminal illness in the family, the grieving process begins before the death actually happens. I experienced this grief by being saddened when people inadvertently treated my father like he was already dead. We had several visitors during Thatthi's illness. Most made small talk with him and were either hearty or tongue-tied in his presence. Their

more “real” conversations were with us, away from the sickroom. An inability to talk naturally to the terminally ill probably reflects our own discomfort with the reality of impending death. But I felt sadness listening to the conversations with Thatthi move from natural to stilted. It was as if friends had already severed their connection to him, had already assigned him to their past.

Allow the bereaved to talk about their grief – or not

After my father died, besides at the funeral, hardly anyone spoke about him with me. It was as if he never existed. This heightened my grief. A cherished gift you can offer the grieving is an invitation to talk about their loss and to talk about their loved one if they choose. To be sure, talking to the bereaved about their loss after the funeral is an unfamiliar art. It is as if we experience a sort of paralysis, fearing our own incompetence in dealing with the extreme vulnerability of the grieving. But to share memories and ask for stories of the person who has died can be a valued gift to the person in grief.

In my Sri Lankan context, people were extraordinarily generous in extending practical help, even at cost to themselves. As a culture, though, we were not accustomed to offering emotional support. In our American context, we may have the reverse situation. We may weary the grieving person by trying to make her tell us how she “really” feels, even when she prefers a little space. Allow the person to speak or not; the person in grief is not obliged to respond in detail to everyone who asks her how she feels. When people do share, we need to listen well so that we don’t dismiss what they are actually saying because it doesn’t fit our ideas of what they should be feeling.

Acknowledge that you don’t know how they feel

Don’t tell them you know how it feels unless you have experienced a similar bereavement yourself. And even then, you most likely don’t know how they feel. All you know is that it hurts. It is okay to say that you can’t imagine what they are going through, even though you might feel that’s not particularly helpful. I had a well-meaning friend who had not lost anyone close to her say that she knew exactly how I felt. This added frustration to my grief. Even if we have experienced a similar grief, our feelings and theirs will not correspond exactly. In a situation of raw grief, it is wise to allow our grieving friend be the expert on their own feelings.

Be sensitive on your first encounter after the funeral

If at all possible, don’t allow your own awkwardness to increase the burden on the grieving. Returning to campus after the funeral, I met a friend who looked nervously at me, unsure of what to say. It was left to me to initiate the conversation to put her at ease. It was almost funny to see the relief on her face as she understood that we could still talk normally.

Sometimes it takes a long time for the reality

of the loss to hit home. The intense busyness in the period immediately after the death can keep the bereaved from dealing deeply with the reality of the loss. My period of intense grieving was a few months after Thaththi’s death. During that time I had a visit from a friend whom I hadn’t talked with since the funeral. I assumed she had come to see how I was doing, but her plan was to discuss student ministry. Predictably, our conversation was mutually unsatisfying. I was still grieving, even though she had moved on.

Understand the secondary losses

Although the primary loss is the loss of the loved one, there are many secondary losses that become apparent over time. One of these secondary losses is the termination of the identity-by-association with your loved one.

“DON’T TELL THEM YOU KNOW HOW IT FEELS UNLESS YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED A SIMILAR BEREAVEMENT YOURSELF. AND EVEN THEN, YOU MOST LIKELY DON’T KNOW HOW THEY FEEL.”

If someone loses a spouse and they have always done activities with a clique of other couples, she might feel she no longer belongs to that group. If a parent loses her teenager, she will also miss her child’s friends that once hung out

at her house for hours on end. With Thaththi’s death, I sensed a loss of the identity our family had experienced in church. My father had been heavily involved in the lay leadership of our large congregation. Family conversations had often included a healthy dose of church gossip. Suddenly we were cut off from it. Everybody was kind, but we were no longer at the hub of church affairs. We had lost a part of our identity and this only compounded our grief at the loss of our father.

Extend practical help

During my bereavement, we had a lot of practical help from different people. This ranged from a friend and neighbor inviting me in for lunch every day during the month my mother stayed with Thaththi in hospital to my father’s friend unobtrusively leaving a bag of provisions in the kitchen when he visited us after the funeral. It is okay to say “let me know if you

need any help," but realize that this lays the burden of asking for help on the grieving person. Instead suggest ways you would be available if she needs support. Even better, just do some things that you know will be appreciated. Bring some groceries. Bring dinner. Provide a gift certificate for a restaurant or take-out. Visit and wash dishes. Fold a pile of laundry. Vacuum the living room. Play with the children.

Support the bereaved as they make difficult choices

Affirm your friend as she makes hard choices in adapting to her new circumstances. When my father died, I was president of my university's missional christian community (known as the discipleship cells) and also chair of the national student leadership team that envisioned ministry priorities across all the campuses as well as provided a support network for the particular ministries on each campus. I believe my main focus at that time was to be both faithful to the ministry on the campuses and sensitive to the emotional needs of our family. Thus I decided not to put in the concentrated effort needed for my best academic work, but only what was manageable. If I had striven for greater academic excellence at that juncture of my life, I would not have been able to cope with the demands of ministry and our family needs, including my own.

I also began coming home for weekends more frequently than before. Even though on a limited student budget, I started the practice of taking the expensive express train or air-conditioned bus rather than the cheap slow train or bus, so that I would be less travel fatigued and more available to my family.

Celebrate and Remember the loved one

Even though the ache has dulled over time, there will always be moments when I greatly miss Thaththi. I always love hearing stories of how he impacted others. On the occasional visit to my old home church, a friend would still say that much of what he learned about leadership was picked up from my father. Your friend will also

appreciate your memories of their loved one. If you never met their lost loved one, invite your friend to share a special story about them. We love the opportunity to remember and celebrate our loved one with you!

Allow me to share one story to celebrate my father with you and give you a sense of who he was. Thaththi ended up as the director of a prestigious conference facility in Colombo. It was his title and the reputation of the organization that were the perks for him; salaries were poor and he earned a rather low wage compared to those in similar positions in the private sector. Yet when it was time for a revision of the salary scale for all employees, he reduced the gap between the salaries of the workers and that of management. He initiated a small increase for himself and the few white collar employees and allocated a generous increase in wages for the blue collar workers who ended up benefiting greatly as they were also eligible to earn overtime if they chose.

God was very present all through my bereavement as I received his comfort and was deepened in my own walk with him. Yet all too often we pray, but go no farther in providing support for our grieving friends, ill-equipped to be sources of God's comfort. It is a great solace to the bereaved to be allowed to grieve as needed but also to be able to remember and share with friends and family – and even with new acquaintances – remembrances of the person they have lost. May we allow God to shape us to become compassionate comforters of the bereaved.

If you have suffered the loss of a loved one, how have you been helped by others in your grief? What actions or words have been helpful? What have you found difficult? What suggestions do you have for others who are grieving or who are caring for someone in their grief?

(This article first appeared on "The Well" a blog run by the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship at <<http://thewell.intervarsity.org/in-focus/responding-anothers-grief>>)

தலைமைத்துவம்

வு.ர். ஹேமானந்தி

கிறிஸ்துவுக்குள் பிரியமான சகோதாரர்களே **Captive** சஞ்சிகையினூடாக உங்களை சந்திப்பதில் மகிழ்ச்சியடைகிறேன் இந்தியாவின் தலைநகரான புதுடெல்லியில் இடம்பெற்ற “நகரங்களில் செல்வாக்கு செலுத்துதல்” மகாநாட்டில் கலந்துகொள்ள தேவன் கிருபை செய்தார். வேறுபட்ட கலாச்சார பின்னணியைகொண்ட பிற நாட்டவர்களை சந்திக்கவும் அவர்களோடு பழகவும் எங்களுக்கு சந்தர்ப்பம் கிடைத்தது. (நேபாளம், கொரியா, உகண்டா) பிற நாட்டவர்கள் எங்களுடன் மிகவும் அன்பாக பழகினார்கள். அவர்களின் நேர முகாமைத்துவம் எங்களை மிகவும் அதிகமாக கவர்ந்தது.

இம் மகாநாட்டில் கலந்துரையாடப்பட்ட பல விடயங்களில் ஒரு பகுதியை உங்களுடன் பகிர்ந்து கொள்ள விரும்புகிறேன். இங்கு தலைமைத்துவத்தில் இருப்பவர்கள் கொண்டிருக்க வேண்டிய சில முக்கிய விடயங்களை நெகேமியா புத்தகத்தில் ஆழமாக கற்றுக் கொடுத்தார்கள். அவற்றுள் சில:

1. ஆலயத்தில் மாத்திரம் அல்லாமல் வேலைத்தளங்களிலும் நடைமுறை வாழ்க்கையிலும் இயேசுவுக்கு சாட்சியாய் வாழ வேண்டும். இரட்டை வாழ்க்கை வாழக் கூடாது. (நெகேமியா 1:11)
2. எங்களை சூழ உள்ள பிரதேசங்களில் நிகழும் காரியங்களை குறித்து அக்கறையற்றவர்களாக சுயநலமாக இருந்தால் நாம் வாழும் பிரதேசங்களில்

மாற்றங்களைக் கொண்டு வர முடியாது. (நெகேமியா 2:2)

3. தலைமைத்துவத்தில் உள்ளவர்கள் உணர்வரீதியாக உடனடியாக தீர்மானம் எடுக்காமல் அனைத்தையும் ஆராய்ந்து அறியவேண்டும் (நெகேமியா 2:15, 16)

4. மாற்றங்களை ஏற்படுத்த விரும்புகிறவர்கள் கொடுக்கப்பட்ட அதிகாரத்தை அங்கத்தவர்கள் மீது வன்முறையாகப் பிரயோகிக்காமல் அங்கத்தவர்களுடன் சேர்ந்து ஐக்கியமாக செயற்பட வேண்டும். (நெகேமியா 2:2)

5. எதிர்ப்புக்கள் உருவாகும் போது அங்கத்தவர்களை தனியே விட்டுச் செல்லாமல் அவர்களுடைய உணர்வுகளை அறிந்து சவால்களை எதிர்கொள்ள அவர்களைத் தைரியப்படுத்த வேண்டும். (நெகேமியா 6.9)

6. பிரச்சினைகளுக்கான தீர்வுகளை மேலோட்டமாக நோக்காமல் அடிப்படைக் காரணங்களை ஆராய்ந்து தீர்வுகளை முன்வைக்க வேண்டும். (நெகேமியா 13.8)

7. குழுவில் உள்ள அங்கத்தவர்களை தங்களுக்கு கொடுக்கப்பட்டிருக்கின்ற பொறுப்புக்களில் தாங்களாகவே தலைமைத்துவம் செய்யும்படியாக பயிற்றுவித்தல். (நெகேமியா 13.30)

ஆகவே எந்த காரியங்களையும் நாம் அறிவு ரீதியாக மாத்திரம் சிந்திக்காமல் செயன்முறையில் பிரயோகிக்கும் போது சிறந்த பிரதிபலனை நாம் ஒவ்வொருவரும் பெற்றுக் கொள்ளமுடியும்.

(Continued from page 13)

How best do you think Christians can witness to Christ in the context of Moratuwa university?

I think raising questions about the ethics of technology is one way that conversations can get started. There is also some interesting work regarding how technology required a Christian world view in order to develop – e.g. taking the outside world seriously (rather than treating it as an illusion) and the notion of linear progress (rather than cyclic repetition); also the evidence that Christian monastic orders were actually world affirming (rather than world denying) and used technology to improve the lot of the peasantry.

What apologetic questions should they be ready to face when witnessing to fellow students?

I don't think there are questions specific to Moratuwa university. But there is a widespread contention that Buddhism is based on reason (seen as more respectable in academia, especially in the fields of science and technology); while Christianity is based on faith (seen to be intellectually deficient). In fact virtually all of science and mathematics (and indeed engineering) is heavily dependent on “plausible reasoning” (which requires faith of some sort); while popular Buddhism is often shot through with appeals to or appeasements of the supernatural.

PIONEERING MINISTRY

Rajarata University

Sansfica Young, a FOCUS graduate, is a lecturer at the Faculty of Science and meets some Christian students with the Roman Catholic chaplain on Wednesdays. They use the university chapel as they are not allowed to meet on the university premises.

Please pray:

That God will open the door for them to have their regular meetings at the university premises.

That God will bless the work Sansfica is doing for God's Kingdom at this university.

That God will powerfully use our upcoming visit to the university.

Sabaragamuwa University

We have a diverse group of ten to fifteen students gathering for prayer and Bible study from 4-5pm on Tuesdays. Paheerathan has been visiting this university and having special meeting with these students since 2015.

Please pray:

That as the more active, senior students, leave and new students take up leadership, that these new students will catch the vision for university ministry and commit themselves to it.

That the relationship between the Tamil and Sinhala students in the fellowship will grow into deep and genuine friendships.

God will enable the group to register itself as the student Christian body within the university.

Kilinochchi - Faculties of Engineering & Agriculture

We have about eight to ten students here, but all of them are from the Faculty of Agriculture. Many students live outside of Kilinochchi and so head home for the weekends; they also have a heavy lecture schedule. As a result, one of our main struggles is having regular meetings. The group

hopes to have regular meetings inside the university premises this year.

Please pray:

That God will help us find Christian students at the Faculty of Engineering as well.

That God will help these students to conduct their regular meetings in their university premises.

That God will enable the group to register itself as the student Christian body within the university.

University of Kelaniya - Ragama Medical Faculty

Dr. Lalin Fernando has met with students of the Ragama Medical Faculty at the hospital and conducts regular prayer meetings. A struggle here is having regular meetings as students are often too busy with lectures and exams.

Please pray:

That God will put into the hearts of these medical students the need to meet regularly as a Christian community.

That God will help these students understand the importance of university ministry and commit themselves to take it forward.

God will bless Dr. Lalin Fernando and use him to bless many students.

South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine – (SAITM)

Contact was made with some final year students and it was possible to have prayer with them on a regular basis. However, it has been difficult to find committed junior students.

Please pray:

That the younger students will catch the vision of university ministry, and will be committed to it.

That State university students will accept these students as their own brothers & sisters.

OTHER UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

There are several other State and private universities and tertiary educational institutes without a corporate witness to Jesus. Please pray that God will raise up students who will witness to him in these places. Also pray that FOCUS will receive the resources and new staff it needs if it is to expand its ministry to these locations.

STUDENT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA

The SCFUM continues to conduct regular Bible studies and prayer every week. Many students, including those from the new batches, participate in these studies.

We recently opened a Facebook page and Twitter account for the fellowship. These have regular updates with information about fellowship meetings, activities and Bible verses. The members have been very helpful in creating and maintaining these accounts. We also printed some welcome cards for new students. We use these help ensure all incoming Christian students know about the fellowship.

For Christmas, we decided to show our gratitude to the cleaning staff of the university. We made some "Thank you" cards and attached them to pieces of Christmas cake. We gave these to members of the cleaning staff and spent some time with them. It was a pleasant and blessed day for all of us.



Prayer requests:

Our fellowship is not well-known at our university. Please pray that God will guide us as we spread the word and seek new members for our fellowship.

Please pray for those of our members who are undergoing industrial training. Pray that they will achieve great things and glorify the Lord in their work places. Others are about to finish their studies. Pray that the Lord will guide them and enable them to glorify Him in every aspect of life.

There are some ongoing issues at the IT Faculty which have led to its temporary closure. Pray for a quick solution so that the Faculty may reopen and students can return to their work. Also pray for the prevention of such problems in the future.

Some members of the fellowship faced some difficulties for standing against ragging in their faculties. Pray for them to stand strong for the Lord and also that the Lord will touch every person involved with ragging, so that it may be stopped completely.

Some of our members find it hard to balance their studies and the work of God. Pray for God's guidance so that they may balance their studies, and also be witnesses to Him in all areas of university life.

PERADENIYA DISCIPLESHIP CELLS

The highlight of the last few months at our fellowship was the Carol Service for the year 2015 which was held on 12th of December at the University Christian Chapel. Around 80 students consisting of both Christians and non-Christians, as well as some staff participated in this event.

Our regular activities include weekly Bible studies which are conducted every Wednesday at the Medical Faculty. The studies are completely student-led and for the last 3 months we have studied the book of Acts. We also hold a service every Sunday in the evening at the University Christian Chapel. The service is trilingual and is attended by most of the Christian students in the University. After the service the students generally stay back and discuss various issues from a Christian perspective.

Prayer requests:

Several senior members of the fellowship are leaving, a new leadership has taken over, and fresh students are coming in. Pray that this transition will be smooth, strengthening rather than disrupting the fellowship.

Thank God for the new batches of students and new contacts. Pray that God will use them to continue our ministry to the university. Pray for the understanding, wisdom and commitment that they need to continue this work.

Pray for the new leadership – that they will have the courage to do new things, the wisdom to understand God's will and the commitment to do His work in the university during the year.

Pray that God will use the fellowship abundantly throughout this year to fulfil His will in the university.

JAFFNA UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship continues to meet regularly for Bible study and prayer. In the past few months we had Bible studies on "Obeying the Word of God", "Living Together in Unity" and "The Purpose of the Christian Life". We also had an outing to Casuarina Beach to build friendships between members of the fellowship.

The highlight last year was our Christmas program, where the JUSCF performed a drama at the carol service. This was well received, and there were several non-Christians among the audience as

well. We have faced a time of relative inactivity in January, however, since most of our members have exams this month. We are looking forward to the challenges ahead, including organizing the National Student Conference in April this year.

Prayer requests:

The new committee of the JUSCF; we have had a delay in electing it due to exams

The National Student Conference in April this year. for all the arrangements, as well as the camp committee.

Those of our members who are preparing and sitting for their exams

UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

UCCF has been going through some challenging times for the past several months. We have not been meeting regularly except for prayers, and have faced low numbers and a lack of commitment. We had several plans for Christmas in December, including putting up posters, a street drama and a discussion on Christmas. However, we did not carry them out. Therefore, this is a time to rethink the basics and re-evaluate our approach to the ministry.

Prayer requests:

A new core was appointed at the annual general meeting on the 29th of January. Pray for the commitment, vision, passion and boldness they

need to regroup and recommit to our mission in the university.

Pray for the students from new batches that we are reaching out to, that they will be able to come, and for us as we seek to reach out to more students

Ragging is a problem in many of the faculties, and some of our members are actively involved in attempts to end it. Pray that efforts will bear fruit. Pray also that this will be an opportunity for conversations about why they are working to stop it, and a chance to share their faith.

For commitment and regular attendance at our prayer and Bible study, as well as for innovative new programs as we seek new members.

EASTERN UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Our fellowship has faced some obstacles in the past few months. Due to floods, exams and student-related issues within the university we have not been able to meet regularly. However we hope to take things forward in the new year, particularly in appointing a new core, having regular prayer times, reaching new members and building our fellowship.

Prayer requests:

Wisdom as we choose a new core group, that the right people will be chosen and that they will be



enabled to work together as a team.

For new students, that they will work with greater unity and

devotion in fulfilling God's mission in the university.

For boldness, passion and commitment as we seek to engage the university for God.

PARTNERING

PARTNER IN PRAYER

SENSITIVITY

to the Spirit's leading and to the needs of those around us

PASSION

that mirrors God's passion for His mission in the University

CURIOSITY

to discover the wonder of the world we live in through studies and interactions

BOLDNESS

to step out of our comfort zones and into the place he is calling us to; in pioneering and witnessing

We invite you to use this "prayer wheel" as you pray for the ministry. Pray daily that God will inculcate these qualities in our students.

COMMITMENT

of ourselves entirely to being available to be used by God

FAITH

that is deep and acknowledges the sovereignty of God in our lives and in the university

CREATIVITY

to dream of the myriad ways in which God works

JOIN THE PRAYER GROUP!

send an email to sanjayan@focus.lk

WITH FOCUS

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The National Student Conference will be held in April, in Jaffna this year.
- FOCUS Staff and Council will attend a governance training seminary on the 12th and 13th of May 2015
- The Graduates Christian Fellowship will be holding its National Camp in July, from the 16th to the 19th. Please mark the dates in your diaries and plan early to take leave on the 18th!
- Two “Faith and Work Conferences” are due to be held this year, one on Law, and the other on Engineering. The conference on Law is due to be held in September, while the one Engineering is planned for July.

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Transforming society through transformed students