

**VOTE OF THANKS on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023 at 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo.**

Your Lordship Chief Justice, Honorable Attorney General, Honorable Judges of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, Learned Presidents' Counsel, Emeritus Professor G.L. Peiris, Emeritus Professor Savithri Goonesekara, Vice Chancellor, Our Dean, Principal of the Law College, President of the Bar Association, My Lecturers, Professor Sharya, Dr.Sunil Coorey, Colleagues of the Bar, friends at the Law Faculty, and Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to propose this vote of thanks. Our President, whom I fondly refer to as the Iron Lady, has already expressed her gratitude, but it is customary for me to do so as well. Before I proceed, may I take a moment of your time and refer to a personal note.

During my time at the Law Faculty, a fellow student, a dear friend and colleague from a different medium, approached me three months after we embarked on our LLB journey seeking financial assistance. He explained that he hadn't received support from his parents and needed help which amounted to a small sum. Without hesitation, I extended a helping hand every week or fortnight. I share this story to emphasize the passion that was instilled in me to support fellow students. This continued for three and a half to four years. Every time he took the money, he promised to repay it someday. True to his word, after a decade, he approached me. He

had meticulously kept an account of the amount he had borrowed and he returned same to me. I refused to take it but he insisted. I was almost in tears that a friend I had helped had kept his promise and returned the money.

During the period I was helping him, I made a personal commitment to utilize the knowledge and skills I gained from the faculty to assist others. After completing my final exam at Law College, I joined Mr. Navaratnarajah, QC Chambers in February 1981. He was a giant of the bar at that time—a very humble, generous, and kind person whom I consider one of the most remarkable individuals I've met in my lifetime. Mr. Navaratnarajah was always ready to extend a helping hand, whether it was financial assistance or any other form of support, to students and young lawyers in need. During my time working with him, I witnessed numerous law students and lawyers receiving his assistance, and I understand how impactful that aid was in helping them to establish their careers. This experience served as a great source of inspiration for me as well, motivating me to assist others who require support.

Today, I stand before you, a product of this Esteemed institution. However, the education alone is insufficient. It has been my unwavering commitment to assist students, and this should be call to action for all of us gathered here.

Mr. Navaratnarajah passed away on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1994, and few friends and juniors to name a few, Mr. BJ Fernando PC, Mr. Sivarasa PC,

Mr. K. Kanag-Iswaran PC, Mr. Shammil Perera, P.C., Mr. K. Neelakandan, Mr. Basheer Ahamed, Mr. N.R. Sivendran, Ms. Uda Devi, Ms. Saumya Jayasekara, Mr. Nithi Murugesu and myself established the P. Navaratnarajah Foundation to continue extending our helping hand to students in need etc. On 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1995, we held the Inaugural Navaratnarajah Memorial Oration and Justice Mark Fernando was the chief guest who delivered the Oration and recognized the assistance given to students and young lawyers by Mr. P. Navaratnarajah. I believe that this event served as an inspiration for Justice Mark Fernando to establish the Alumni Association of Faculty of Law with the aim of providing assistance to students. I must add that the Emeritus Professor G.L. Pieris also delivered the 3<sup>rd</sup> Oration on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1997.

When Justice Mark Fernando was leading the AAFL he spoke to me and wanted me to join the Association, which I gladly did. I was elected as the President of the Association twice and we have done whatever possible for the students.

As we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Law Faculty at the University of Colombo, let us not only revel in today's festivities but also carry home the spirit of goodwill and support for students. I trust you've all had an enjoyable time. We have already contributed one million rupees to the AAFL Education Trust from the proceeds of the Back to Faculty event, which was held last year and from this event, we hope to donate two million rupees. However, this is not sufficient to meet the growing needs of our students. Therefore, I appeal to my colleagues, seniors, friends, and

all the learned ladies and gentlemen present today to contribute whatever you can to the Trust.

I express my sincere gratitude to all those attending today. If there have been any shortcomings, please accept our apologies.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to our Dean Professor Sampath Punchihewa for his invaluable support, as well as to the members of the Law Faculty Alumni who have worked tirelessly to make this event a success. President Mrs. Alagaratnam has been instrumental in organizing this function, and I appreciate her dedicated efforts. I'd also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the committee members and extend our sincere appreciation to our generous sponsors: the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants, Sri Lankan Airlines, Link Natural Products, John Keells Properties, Lanka Hospitals, Prime Lands and Union Assurance. Mr. Hanif Yousuf who has contributed personally and did not want any publicity for his Company – Expo-Lanka. Without their contributions, this event wouldn't have been the grand success it is. I must also thank Ms. Thavini and Mr. Adamaly, our Treasurer, for compering this event voluntarily, and without them, this event would not have been successful like this.

I must also extend my thanks to the management of Imperial Monarch for graciously accommodating our needs and facilitating this event, as well as to the dance performers, the DJ, the photographer, and HI TV for their contributions in making this event a success.

Thank you very much. Please do not rush away just yet. There are chocolates awaiting you, and there's even more dancing to enjoy.