

**Inauguration Lecture**  
**for**  
**2009/2010 Medical Students**

**Faculty of Medicine**  
**University of Peradeniya**

**By**  
**Professor Dayasiri Fernando**

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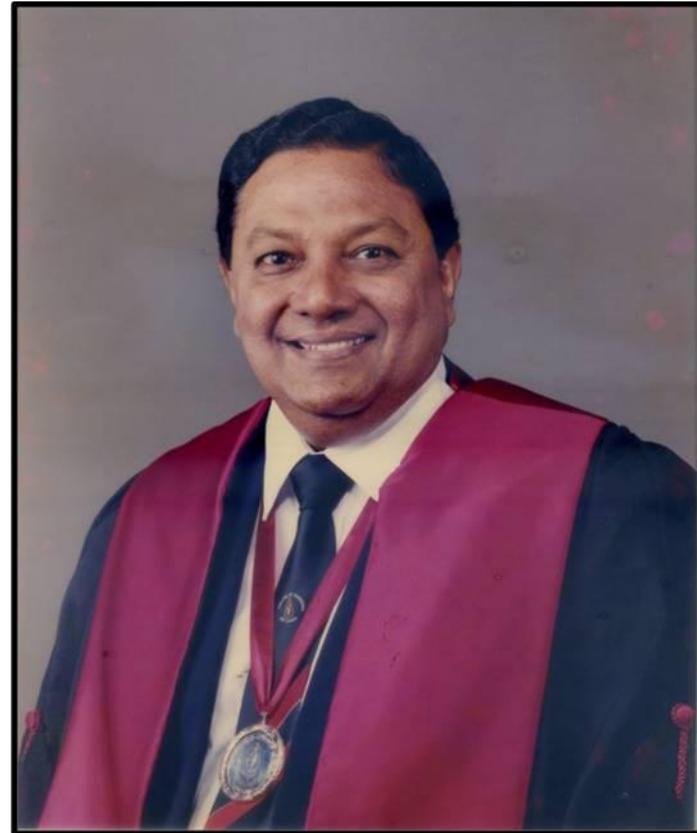
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සොයා එතෙරට ඉඟිලෙන මේ කුරුල්ලන්ගෙන් වැඩි දෙනෙක් තමන්ගේ විශ්‍රාම කාලය ගෙවන්නට නැවත පියඹා එන්නේ මේ රටටමයි. මෙය අපූරු දෙයක් නේද? එතකොට මේ රට හොඳයි. චිලෝව පෙනෙන කොට, මෙලෝව අපේ රට හොඳයි.

My dear students, finally what matters at the end of the day are the sense of fulfillment in yourself, and not the amount of money you amass. You must be able to say that “I did my best with what I had, and I am happy and content. Dear Students, I can honestly say, that I have this sense of fulfillment. And I wish, that you, too in the years to come would say the same.

In the words of William Thomas, the greatest and perhaps the most precious gift we can give to our country is the gift of ourselves at our best, and that means not just the skills of our hands and the cunning of our brains, but our dreams, our finest resolutions and the most solemn promises to ourselves.

Mr. Dean, I thank you once again, for this honour and privilege to deliver this commencement lecture and wish to say that I deeply appreciate this great privilege, and my dear students, I extend to you my warmest wishes for a very enjoyable and a successful life as a medical student, and a productive life as a doctor serving Sri Lanka.



serve your mother land. Your careers were molded here. All the members of your academic staff including your Dean, has set the example for you to follow. I remember the late Mr. Lakshman Kadirgama had this to say at a felicitation ceremony for him at Oxford “Yes Oxford was icing on the cake, but the cake was baked at home”. Mr. Kadirgama came back to Sri Lanka and served the country till his last breath.

There are so many, who have gone abroad for training, at our expense, and have not returned. They try to calculate this in Rupees and cents, and settle the bond and forget it. It’s not a matter of rupees and cents. It’s what you, owe this country and everyone responsible for the molding of your life here .....ඔව්, ඔබ මේ තත්වයට එන තුරු, ඔබට පිහිට වූ අය බොහෝමයි. ඔබ මෙලොව උපන් මොහොතේ පිහිට වූන වෛද්‍යවරයා, වින්නඹු අම්මා, ඔබගේ පවුලේ අය, ඔබව රැක බලා ගත් අය, ඔබට කෂම පිළියෙල කල අය, ඔබේ කිලිට් රෙදි සෝදුපු අය, ඔව් ලයිස්තුව බොහොම දිගයි. ඒ සෑම දෙනාටම ඔබ ණය ගැනියි. එය රුපියල් සත අතර ගැටළුවක් නොවෙයි. එය ඔබේ යුතුකමයි.

අපේ රටේ ඉගෙන ගත්, අපේ මුදලින් ඉගෙන ගත් අයගෙන් වෙනත් රටවල් එල තෙලා ගන්නවා දැකීම, බොහොම දුක් සිතෙන කරුණක්. ඔවුන් කොපමන ලස්සන මාලිගා සැදුවත් සුඛෝපභෝගී වාහනවල ගමන් කලත්, ඔවුන් ඒ රටවල දෙවැනි පුරවැසියන්. හැබැයි නිල්ල

## **Introduction of the Speaker by the Dean, Faculty of Medicine**

It is traditional to invite an eminent & wise person to deliver what is called an inaugural lecture to each batch of new entrants to the Faculty of Medicine. Prof. Dayasiri Fernando is qualified on both counts being eminent and wise. He is an Emeritus Professor of Surgery having been a Vice-Chancellor, Chairman of the Public Services Commission, a Senior Naval Officer in the services of our country. He is considered the God Father of the field of Gastroenterology in Sri Lanka. He is well-known as an excellent actor. He is an advisor in a personal capacity at the highest levels of governance. The new students should consider it an honor to be addressed by Prof. Dayasiri Fernando as their first experience in learning in the University.

**Gamini Buthpitiya**

The Dean

Faculty of Medicine

Peradeniya

affliction, share with their anxieties and rejoice in their recoveries.”

Learn to live up to this expectation from the very first day as a medical student and in later years, you will know the truth of what I am saying now. People will look at you differently. Even the traffic police will treat you differently. I don't know how a doctor can be anything else. When someone reaches out to you in illness. They come and say “අනේ දොස්තර මහත්තයා..... අනේ දොස්තර මහත්තයා මගේ දරුවා..... අනේ දොස්තර මහත්තයා කොහොමහරි මගේ අම්මා බේරලා දෙන්න” This is the divine calling. These are the people in the hospital wards, helpless and sick. Now, how can you leave them and walk out of the wards, when trade union leaders call a strike. Patients with drips, catheters, seriously ill awaiting surgery for cancer, - how can you leave them and walk out. What have they done to you to be treated like that? Can they complain? No, but very silently they'll say, අනේ දොස්තර මහත්තයා..... ඇයි මේ..... So, when you face similar situations in the years to come, think as a doctor and act with courage.

මේ රටේ මහජනයා ඔබගෙන් තවත් වැදගත් බලාපොරොත්තුවක් තියෙනවා ඔබ මේ රටට සේවය කරාවිය කියා. They expect the country to benefit from your learning. It is Sri Lanka that you must serve and no other country. This is your mother land. Money and wealth must not blind you to this truth. By all means go abroad and learn as much as you can, but come back with all the expertise to

In Sinhalese there are two words වෙදකම සහ හෙදකම. That is treating a disease and treating the psychological aspect of the disease. So you get the word වෙද හෙදකම These two together are important.. That is what Dr R L Spittel said “you must not loose the human touch by considering the disease a thing part from the patient. If you practice correctly people will look upto you. Especially in the villages. They will treat you like a king. This is my experience working as a very young doctor in Badulla. “රජෙක් උනත් වෙදෙක් උනත් ” is a book written by a young doctor. They even see you as a God, when they are ill. I have often heard people say “අපේ දෙස්තර මහත්තයා දෙව් කෙනෙක්” One of my patients wrote a book after her operation expressing her gratitude to my staff. The title of the book is “මනු ලොව දෙව්වරු” The introduction to this book began with these lines:

වන සිව්පාවුන් වැනි මිනිසුන් මැද  
 දෙව් දේවතාවන් වැනි මිනිසුන් ඇත

She has written that she really appreciated the meaning of these two lines of this song, when she was treated by my staff, having had surgery for colon cancer. I was very happy that my team of doctors has lived up to the expectations of the patients, expectation of the teachers, and my expectation. It is my wish that you would do likewise. Now, again think of the words of Dr R L Spittel. He said “Your profession will be a rewarding and an ennobling one. You will be their hope in times of

Vice Chancellor, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Members of the academic staff, Dear students, Ladies and Gentleman. It is indeed a great honour to be invited to deliver this inauguration lecture for the new students of the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya. It is indeed a privilege, and I thank you very much.

When I read the letter from your Dean, a few lines from a stage play of Mr. Henry Jayasena came to my mind. I first saw this play when I was a final year medical student, at the YMBA Borella. Then later, only a few years ago, when it went on the stage for the last time, I had the privilege to act in this play in the role of “the Baladari,” under the direction of Mr. Henry Jayasena himself. The play was about a true story involving an undergraduate like you, at the University of Peradeniya. These lines from the play are very relevant for this occasion.

කාගෙද මේ දරුපැටියා  
 අපේ.....අපේ.....අපේ.....

කවිඳු මෙහෙම	කියන්නේ
දෙමව්පියෝ	කියන්නේ
අසල් වැසියෝ	කියන්නේ
සොර සතුරොත්	කියන්නේ

කාගේද මේ සිසු දරුවා  
අපේ.....අපේ.....අපේ.....

කවිද මෙහෙම කියන්නේ  
අදුරුකුමෝ කියන්නේ  
පාලකයෝ කියන්නේ  
හැමදෙනාම කියන්නේ

ඔව් දරුවනි ඔබ අද සිට අයිති ඉතා දැකුම්කළු පරිසරයක පිහිටි  
මේ, අහර්ග, කලාත්මක, ප්‍රබල විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ වෛද්‍ය පීඨයටයි.

Dear Students, today is a very special day in your lives. It is the day on which you begin a new life as a person who will learn the practice of medicine. This is an ancient and a very noble profession. This is the art of healing, and caring for the sick and infirmed. This is a divine calling “ දිව්‍යමය කැඳවීමක් ” and you have responded to this divine calling. So let me begin by congratulating you on this decision to select this particular course of study.

Fifty years ago, I too, like you, sat in the anatomy lecture hall of the Faculty of Medicine, in Colombo and listened to our commencement lecture. This lecture was delivered by the famous Dr. R L Spittel, who was a genius, I am sure you would have read some of his books. He was one of the best known writers, a poet, anthropologist, artist,

කලු ගල් තලා පාරේ මම දමන්නේ  
ඒ ගල් උඩින් සුදු පාවඩ වලන්නේ  
ඒ පාවඩ උඩින් කවුරුද අර වඩන්නේ  
සිල්ප සතර ගෙන මගෙ පුතු වඩන්නේ  
  
අතකින් සිල්ප ගෙන මගෙ පුතු චිතවාය  
අතකින් සතර ගෙන මගෙ පුතු චිතවාය  
සිතකින් මා පිනන මා පුතු චිතවාය  
චිතෙකින් අපේ දුක් බර හිම වෙනවාය

So let nothing stop you from living to their expectations චිතෙකින් අපේ දුක් බර හිම වෙනවාය. When you come to the end of your journey, there is another group of people waiting to welcome you as a doctor. They are the people of this country.

It is important for you to never forget that it is their money that supports you as a student in this university. You are taught free, provided with all the facilities. Some are even supported financially like with Mahapola scholarships. So, on your graduation, you become the great healer to them, the people who supported you. Remember that it is after your graduation that you can practice medicine, not as medical students. හොඳට මතක තියාගන්න, වෛද්‍යවරයෙක් වුනාමයි, වෙදකම කරන්න අයිතිය ලැබෙන්නේ.

ඔබ වෛද්‍යවරයෙක් වීමයි. I remember an incident when I was the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Sri Jayawardenepura. A student who has failed many times came to me and said, “සර් මාව කොහොම හරි පාස් කරන්න ඕනේ මේ මගේ විභාගය කරන්න තියෙන අන්තිම වතාව” This student belonged to other group, pulling you away from your studies. I said, “How can I do this? It’s you who must pass the exam.” Then he cried and said “අනේ සර් මට ලේල් වෙලා ගෙදර යන්න බෑ. කොහොමද මම ඒ අයට කියන්නේ මම විභාගේ ලේල් වුනා කියලා. මමයි අපේ ගමෙන් ඉස්සෙල්ලාම විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයට ආවේ. මුලු ගමම රැස් වුනා මාව පිටත් කරන්න. ගමේ හාමුදුරුවෝ අනුශාසනා කරමින් කීවා දොස්තර කෙනෙක් වෙලා ගමේ කීර්ති නාමය රකින්න කියලා. මම ඒ අයට දැන් කියන්නේ කොහොමද මම විභාගේ ලේල් වුනා කියලා.” අන්න ඔබ මේ ගමන පටන් ගන්න විට, ඔබව පිටත් කල, ඔබේ දෙමව්පියන් ගෙන්, ඔබේ ගමේත් බලාපොරොත්තුවද වියමයි.

නැවත වරක් මට මතක් වෙනවා හෙන්රි ජයසේන මහතාගේ නාට්‍යයේ තවත් කොටසක්. මෙයින් පෙන්වන්නේ විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ සිටි ඒ දරුවාගේ මවයි. ඇය ඉතා දිලිඳුයි. පීවත් වුනේ ගල් කඩලා. ගල් කඩන ගමන් තම වකම දරුවා ගැන හදවතට නැගුණු සිතුවිලි මෙසේ කවියට නගයි.

archeologist, a lover of art and humanities, and above all an eminent surgeon. I sat spell bound listening to him. Let me share his words with you. He said “you will find this profession a rewarding and an ennobling one, for it will bring you closer to your fellow human beings. You will get to know your patients well and become their friend. You will be their hope in time of affliction, share with them their anxieties, rejoice in their recoveries and partake in their sorrow. You must not lose the human touch by considering the disease as a thing apart from the patient. In a measure you will become used to human affliction, but you must never become callous to it.

Listening to these words I became convinced that I was not an ordinary student. Not an ordinary undergraduate. I was an undergraduate with a difference. You are the same. An undergraduate who is different to other undergraduates in this University, because you, at the end of your course of study pursue a profession as a doctor, who will hold in your hands the life, the expectations and the tears of your patients. It is very important for you to realize this today, the first day of your career.

Dear Students, this is a university. You are no longer in school. As a student of medicine you learn all the time. This is a demanding course of study. There is no syllabus. It is absurd to think of a syllabus. When a patient comes to you, he must be treated. You cannot say, “ අනේ

අම්මේ ඔයාගේ ලෙඩේ සිලබස් එකේ තිබුනේ නෑනේ ” Can you say this? So it is a different way of studying. Remember, there are no tuition masters. ටියුෂන් පන්ති නෑ, පන්ති පවත්වන්නේ වාට්ටුවලයි. Also, remember as a profession, it is a 24 hour commitment, every day of the year, whether it is a Sunday, poya day or a public holiday. When a patient reaches out to you in sickness, you have to respond irrespective of the time of day or night. Just think, if a man is brought to you with a stab injury of the chest, or a child is struggling to breathe, you can't say, “හෙට බලන්නම් මම දැන් ඕඬ්” Can you say this? You will end up in courts, and you'll have the lawyers after you. So attitudes must necessarily be different and correct. Realize this now.

You are the best of “A/Level” Students. You are quality students well geared to this demanding course of study and career. Remember these lines from a poem, which strengthened my mind, as an undergraduate like you.

*“Believe in yourself and in your power to face what this life demands  
Doubt not your strength but do your task with willing heart and hands  
Never let the standard down, be honest just and true  
Then no road is too long, no hill is too steep for you”*

As a student like you, I too had ambitions and resolutions and dreams as to what I would like to do as a doctor. It all looked very exciting,

he will be a nuisance to others.

So like a pilgrim you go through this journey as a medical student, for five years. During this time, you will meet two groups of people. The first group are your teachers. These are the people who will solidly support you, throughout this journey. They are the ones who show you the way. They are the ones who will mould you. Always remember and honour your teachers and be ever grateful to them. Gods bless those who respect their teachers. “ගුරු නක්තිය ” is an inherent quality in the people of our country. Treasure it. Don't lose it. Some students join trade unions and work against the teachers. Don't do that. Have the courage to say no - ඉනිමග දිගේ උඩට නැගලා, ඉනිමගට පයින් ගනන්න එපා. Remember, while you proceed in this course of study, doing just opposite, is the other group of people pulling you by the leg, away from the path you have chosen. In the Universities today, it is most unfortunate that there are people with different agendas, mainly political trying to scare you and use you for various nefarious activities. Do not let anyone or any force distract you and trap you into various political and other activities. Stay clear of all these evil forces. Your goal should be to successfully complete the five year training programme and become a doctor. You can do politics later. That is the expectations of your teachers මේ පීඨයේ, ඔබට උගන්වන අවාර්ය මන්ඩලය ඔබෙන් බලාපොරොත්තු වන්නේ ද එයයි. අප නැමදෙනාගේම බලාපොරොත්තුවත් ඔබ මේ අවුරුදු පහ, සාර්ථකව සම්පූර්ණ කර,

asleep or even nod, during the lecture. It is sad to say that it is different now. Attitudes have changed and commitment is lacking. Today it is difficult to keep the students even till midnight. All kinds of excuses are given. Remember, you have chosen ‘medicine’ as a career, and as I told you earlier it is a 24 hour commitment. You are training to do this. There should be no compromise. I expect you to resolve today to be different students.

So, you will spend five exciting years, the last year of which will be with your clinical professors who will polish your knowledge and skills to face the final exam and become a qualified doctor.

So it is a lot of work and studying, but do not let that prevent you from enjoying your life as an undergraduate. You are very young and you must make use of all the facilities available in this university and gain the maximum for your life as an undergraduate. Get involved in other activities of this university, both extracurricular and social. There is ample opportunity for this, in this university, set up in this beautiful environment of Hantane, even to fall in love. What is more, even the climate is conducive unlike in Colombo. There are talent shows, sports events, social and religious activities involving staff and students. This means that you must learn to manage your time. Time management is very important in the life of a doctor. A doctor must have some other interest, which will stand him in good stead, when retires. Otherwise

but I soon realized that the only way to achieve these ambitions and make my dreams come true is by commitment and hard work. The determination to succeed is a great thing, but there are no shortcuts to success. Remember John Drinkwater’s prayer,

**“Grant us the will to fashion as we feel**

***Grant us the strength to labour as we know***

***Grant us the purpose ribbed and edged with steel***

**To strike the blow”**

My dear students, today you have taken your first steps in your career. After your English language course you begin the basic science modules. In the anatomy room, with a sense of wonder you will follow the dissections which would reveal to you the marvelous artistry of the structure of the human body, tracing nerve to muscle and blood vessel to organ, The bare skeleton will reveal to you the frame work on which the structure of flesh and blood is molded. You will get to know the harmonious whole that constitutes the living human being. Let not the grinding necessity of remembering facts blind you to the wonder of it all.

Unlike, when I was a medical student, learning on the basis of modules is much more interesting. Straightaway you begin to relate what you learn to the clinical situation, and the teaching/learning process becomes

more meaningful in unraveling the mysteries of the working of the human body and the changes that occur with disease. Or in other words, problem based learning. So, studying becomes very much different from your school days. You cannot memorize and learn. පන්ති ගිහිල්ල, කටපාඩම් කරලා, වමාරන්ත බැහැ, මෙහි පාඩම් කරන විදිහ වෙනස්.

Having completed the first two years, you will next move into the hospital as clinical students which is a different experience. These are the golden years of a student's apprenticeship. As a clinical student, you will get the first real feeling of being a doctor, with your new stethoscopes in hand. You will be tutored abundantly by your teachers while you learn from your patients. Remember the good teachers are not those who repeat the text books, but those who deliver knowledge that would stimulate your interest and imagination. Patients are the best teachers. In my experience that the best students are those who spend long hours in the wards studying from patients, and not those who get immersed in books in the library or a corner of the ward. Give up the habit of carrying bags full of books into the wards. Bring only a small note book and keep your eyes and ears open. As clinical students, you must develop your power of observation. You must have an eye of a hawk I like to quote from Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If',

If you can fill that unforgiven minute  
With sixty seconds worth of distance run  
Yours is the world and everything there's in it  
And what is more, you'll be a man my son

In the same way, you can apply this to the study of medicine,  
If you can fill that unforgiven minute  
With sixty seconds worth of good observation,  
Yours is the diagnosis and everything there's in it

So learn to be very observant like the hawk - උකුසු ඇස් තියෙන්න  
මිනේ.

Doing a clinical appointment as students, we looked forward to the casualty admission day. That was full of excitement, full of action – more in surgery – with a splash of blood on you. Patients are rushed in on trolleys, and wheel chairs, screaming in pain. Patients with extensive injuries, after bomb blasts or traffic accidents or patients seriously ill with myocardial infarcts, accompanied by anxious and crying relatives. It is the experience you get here that will go a long way in your clinical practice. When we were students casualty meant working through the night. We would take a short break and get back to the wards by 7.30am. At that time there were morning lectures and no one dare fall