

An Appreciation: Professor D. P. M. Weerakkody

Disability is not an Inability !



“Disability is not an inability” were the closing words of Professor D. P. M. Weerakkody in a lecture delivered at a ceremony held to mark the distribution of ICT equipment to special categories of deserving people under the ITU-TRCSL e-NABLE project on 09th July 2011 at Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) auditorium.

Beginning with the commencement of the School for the Deaf and Blind, Ratmalana, in 1912, Professor Weerakkody’s lecture surveyed the progress of education for the blind in Sri Lanka, covering residential schools as well as integrated and inclusive education, contributions of various individuals and organizations, and the facilities available to blind students.

Professor D. P. M. Weerakkody is no more. He passed away on 26th June 2013.

Professor Weerakkody was a highly reputed scholar on Western Classics. He graduated from the University of Peradeniya with First Class Honours, and thereafter pursued post – graduate studies in Western Classics at the University of Hull and wrote his thesis “Aspects of the Acquaintance with Taprobane as revealed by the Greek and Roman Writers” in respect of which he received a Doctorate. It is regarded as the singularly important work by a South Asian who had successfully ventured into an area hitherto dominated by western scholars. His book ‘*Taprobane: Ancient Sri Lanka as known to Greeks and Romans*’ (1997) was published by Brepols Turnhout in Belgium as the first volume in the series INDICOPLEUSTOI. His most significant recent contribution is the translation of Plato’s Republic directly from the Greek language to Sinhala.

Prof. Weerakkody was the first and only blind person in Sri Lanka to obtain a Ph.D. and become a full-time University Professor. He has held two prestigious fellowships: the Commonwealth University Staff Fellowship (1987-1988) at University of Nottingham, and the SAARC Fellowship (2000-2001) at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

He has welcomed ICT facilities being extended to help differently abled people and has said “I studied with immense difficulties in those days. But it has now changed. With ICT facilities readily available persons with special needs can achieve their goals without much difficulty now. I thank the Government for embarking on such policies and also for making efforts to arrange activities to enable us to enjoy an almost an equal status and live with others. ICT helps us to achieve this well. Especially as an educational tool it gives us a marvelous support. I wish to request from you on behalf of the special needs persons to pay some more attention to us in future too. I make this request to you as one disabled from birth, but this era has changed into a society catering to special needs”.

“I think both the government and private institutions need to pay closer attention to help persons with special needs. Specially in respect to the need to create more job opportunities for such people in the future. Presently we do not have sufficient opportunities. We wish to make our own distinctive contribution to the development and uplift of our society ”.



Professor Weerakkody had marvelous skills and talent. He had a vision and an aim to help Persons with Special Needs. He supported the ITU- TRCSL e-NABLE project work. He always laid an emphasis on the contribution and the major role that ICT can play to help with persons with special needs.



We have always appreciated and valued the contribution he made to our society.

We express our deepest sympathies and sorrow on the occasion of the death of the former Professor D. P. M. Weerakkody, Dept. of Classical Languages, Head of the Special Need Resource Centre, University of Peradeniya.

Director General & Members of the Commission and staff of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka

For more information please visit the following web links:

<http://www.pdn.ac.lk/arts/classical/dpmw.htm>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CW5_IqWl_3Q

<http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2012/10/28/royal-asiatic-society-sri-lanka-rassl-lecture-on-one-hundred-years-of-education-for-blind-persons-in-sri-lankaon-tuesday-30th-october-2012-at-5-00-p-m/>

<http://archives.dailymirror.lk/2005/11/29/news/8.asp>