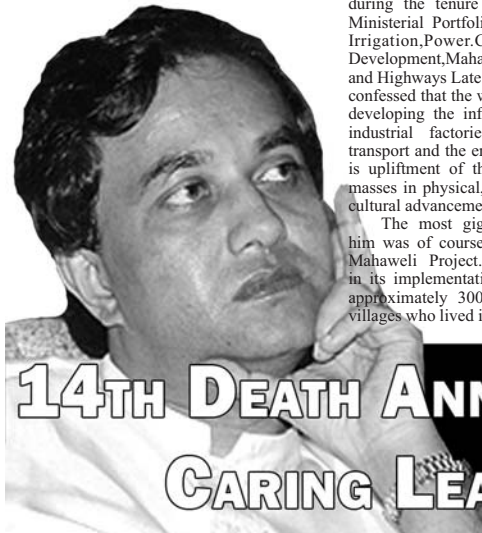




14th death anniversary of Charismatic and Caring Leader late Gamini Dissanayake



14TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF CHARISMATIC AND CARING LEADER LATE GAMINI DISSANAYAKE

to nurture and mature himself to become an ideal politician. When the United National Party came into power in the year 1977, he was entrusted to accept many Ministerial Portfolios, monumental goals and tasks during the tenure of the government. The Ministerial Portfolios entrusted to him were Irrigation, Power, Constructions, Lands, Land Development, Mahaveli, Plantation Industries and Highways. Late Gamini Dissanayake once confessed that the word "development" means developing the infrastructure such as roads, industrial factories, schools, playgrounds, transport and the end result of "development" is upliftment of the living standards of the masses in physical, mental, moral, social and cultural advancement.

The most gigantic task confronted by him was of course the historical accelerated Mahaweli Project. The toughest challenge in its implementation was the evacuation of approximately 3000 families from over 50 villages who lived in the valley of the Kotmale

The efforts of late Gamini Dissanayake while holding several Ministerial Portfolios other than the Mahaweli project have helped immensely to uplift to a large extent the basic living standards especially of the average citizen and made possible to make a tremendous impact on the economic revival of the country, which needs no exaggeration. Besides actively engaged in our development process he found the time to be actively involved in the game of cricket having held office as the President of the Board of Control of Cricket in Sri Lanka, BCCSL (now known as Sri Lanka Cricket) from June 1981 to June 1989 and thereafter for a brief period of four months immediately prior to his tragic death in 1994 during which period he made many significant contributions. During the tenure of past Presidents of the then BCCSL, Robert Senanayake (who held office for 17 years), T.B. Werapitiya, General B.R. Heyn who held office for relatively shorter periods made utmost gentle persuasive

The Sri Lanka Cricket Foundation and was adamant that at any cost he was obtaining full ICC Test status with full membership. He then embarked on a programme of work with a vision to achieve what he felt was best for Sri Lankan cricket. They included the construction of a building to house the Headquarters of cricket at Matland Place, construction of modern indoor net facilities, development of the Asgiriya and other grounds at provincial venues to play international and domestic cricket, inaugurated a programme to send young cricketers for training overseas, launched a cricketers benevolent fund, commenced intensive training for umpires, coaches and curators etc. He was an equally impeccable orator in English. The manner in which he proved our eligibility for full membership at the ICC meeting at Lords in 1981 had the audience spellbound. Ultimately Sri Lanka was finally elected as a full member of the ICC. This achievement was all that remarkable in the

October 23rd 2008 marks the 14th death anniversary of the charismatic and caring leader, late Gamini Dissanayake who was assassinated along with many UNP stalwarts by a LTTE suicide bomber just before the conclusion of a Presidential election campaign meeting at Thotalanga. His tragic death shattered all hopes and thwarted peoples dream of their leader becoming the President, with the elections was just over two weeks away. The loss was irreparable to the whole nation, as during his tenure of 24 years in active politics he had achieved a more than a lifetime's worth of milestones, goals and accomplishments much more than any other politician had achieved.

He was educated at Trinity College Kandy. Although his parents ambition was to make him an accountant he pursued a career in law and practiced as a lawyer. After drawing inspiration from famous leaders like D.S. Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake and J.R. Jayewardena he gave up his lucrative practice as a lawyer and entered politics in the year 1970, becoming a M.P. almost immediately before he was unseated by an election petition he was re-elected to the Nuwara-Eliya/Maskeliya seat in a by-election held in the year 1972. As a young and energetic politician as the people's representative in the Nuwara-Eliya district he extended an yeoman service to all constituents with devotion, commitment and sheer dedication using his typical charismatic approach irrespective of caste, creed and religion regardless of each person's political affiliations. It would be difficult to find another single politician in the annals of the history of the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka who was so highly acclaimed and held in high esteem by his colleagues and so respected by the opponents particularly due to his impartial attitude.

He was a unique and extraordinary politician who listened to the masses, solved their problems, and touched their lives in a very positive and compassionate manner. Anyone who was keen in meeting him had very easy access irrespective of any individual's political affiliations. He was never engaged in petty diverse and partisan politics. He was ever willing to have sensible debates. He possessed a very clear and a dynamic vision, had no intention in making false and hollow promises. His humility and friendly disposition endeared to him to win a large cross section of friends. He placed people at ease. He never differentiated between the rich and the poor and his hospitality to a poor constituent or a rich friend was equal. The treatment meted out was alike without any malice to none, with charity to all.

He was an excellent orator who spoke sense keeping the vivid audiences spellbound. The contents of his speeches spelt out his promises inspiring the desperate with hope for their lives. The firm foundation built and the confidence gained by the people of the electorate in particular helped in his stride

The most gigantic task confronted by him was of course the historical accelerated Mahaweli Project. The toughest challenge in its implementation was the evacuation of approximately 3000 families from over 50 villages who lived in the valley of the Kotmale reservoir. This also included about 15 places of religious worship. The late leader too sacrificed his ancestral lands. Those villages were forced to leave their traditional homes to unfamiliar environments. The Kotmale reservoir was one among other reservoirs, Victoria, Rand enigala, Rantembe, Ulhitiya, Rahkinda and Maduruoya to be built and commissioned under the accelerated Mahaweli development programme. This multipurpose diversion scheme also included the amalgamation of several canals and waterways. This massive Mahaweli scheme with foreign collaboration was maneuvered by efficient personnel deployed both locally and internationally using innovative modern technology under the close scrutiny of the great leader.

The gigantic exercise was initially, targeted to be completed in 30 years. However due to the enormous skill, the charismatic approach and tireless leadership it happened to be completed in an unbelievable short period of just seven years. The Kotmale reservoir was commissioned on 24th August 1985, fulfilling a dream of late Gamini Dissanayake. Those who sacrificed lands have now settled and are living freely and independently having fulfilled their basic needs like jobs, shelter and food, while making maximum use of the golden waters of the reservoir for their agricultural needs. The speech he delivered on that day was emotional and fascinating. While paying great tribute to those who sacrificed lands engulfed in the reservoir, he emphasized that it was made for national interest with a view to a definite development revolution. He said "that I believe the agony and the pain of mind the people of Kotmale and my relatives suffered as a result of loss of ancestral lands will be compensated when they witness the great benefits that this project will bring to the next generation".

As a gesture of national gratitude on 11th April 2003 the "Kotmale Reservoir" was appropriately renamed as the "Gamini Dissanayake Reservoir" by unveiling his statue at a glittering ceremony presided by the then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe with the participation of Cabinet Ministers, VIP's, Madam Srma Dissanayake, The Chairperson of the Gamini Dissanayake Foundation, Navin Dissanayake, Director of the Gamini Dissanayake Foundation and the present Minister of Investment Promotion and other distinguished invitees. This event became more significant as it took place at a time when the farmers were blessed with a bumper paddy harvest deprived them for a long period of time.

methods to the ever relentless International Cricket Council (ICC) the governing body of world cricket to qualify us as full members of the ICC to play Test cricket. The efforts were not given any sympathy but proved futile year after year. It was the England and Australian who had VETO power, who stood against us. They were totally responsible in turning down our desperate quest for full membership of the ICC. The then President of the Pakistani Cricket Board Abdul Hafeez Kardar made valiant efforts for our worthy cause and in sheer desperation accused the ICC of racial discrimination in the year 1975. It was the suggestion of our late President of the then BCCSL to form the Asian Cricket Council along with India to counter the white supremacy at the ICC. It was with a bleak background that he was persuaded to accept the post of President As for him no task or goal was impossible. He changed the infrastructure, which remained unchanged for years. He set new trends and standards in conducting the activities of the then board. He inaugurated

context that he held office as the President of the then board only for a couple of months. The ICC very well knew that we were eligible to enter the elite. But they meted out to us step-motherly treatment. After doing all the spade work it is a great pity that he could not live until 1996 when Sri Lanka won the plum of world cricket, the Wills World Cup in 1996 only 17 months after his tragic demise.

At the conclusion of the 9th edition of the Asia Cup in July 2008 staged in Karachi the late Gamini Dissanayake who was chiefly instrumental in our achieving full Test status was awarded a lifetime award by the Asian Cricket Council as he was a pioneer member who formulated the concept of the Asian Cricket Council, Mrs Srma Dissanayake the Chairperson of the Gamini Dissanayake Foundation and her son Navin Dissanayake, the present Minister of Investment Promotion collected the award from the CEO of the Asian Cricket Council, Ashraf-ul-Haq.

It is pertinent to mention that The Gamini Dissanayake Foundation in keeping with the vision of the late leader has already set up The Gamini Dissanayake Institute of Technology and Vocational Studies in Kandy to provide Vocational training skills for the less privileged children using modern technology.

May he attain the supreme bliss of Nibbana.

Sunil Thenabadu

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