

THE PREMADASA PHILOSOPHY

Selected Thoughts of
Ranasinghe Premadasa

Volume I

A Publication of The Premadasa Centre



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*"If I can become the voice of the voiceless millions,
and become the main instrument that will take them
out of their misery, I will consider that alone as my
greatest achievement."*

*(Special Sessions of the United National Party on 9th October, 1988
at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium)*

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Selected Thoughts of Ranasinghe Premadasa

Volume 1



PREFACE: Ranil Wickremasinghe

INTRODUCTION : Sirisena Cooray

A Publication of the Premadasa Centre

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PREFACE

Seventy years ago one of Sri Lanka's most extraordinary political leaders was born. Ranasinghe Premadasa was extraordinary in several senses. He was extraordinary in the magnitude of the social obstacles he faced and triumphed over. He was extraordinary in the extent of the creative constructive work he was able to do, positively changing the everyday life of large numbers of people. He was also extraordinary in the range and richness of his thinking.

It is this last aspect which is brought out in sharp relief in this slender anthology of his thoughts. The range, depth, originality, creativity and sharpness of his ideas easily mark him out as a major political, social and economic thinker, a major conceptual thinker, by any contemporary standard. Here then was the philosopher - politician, the profundity of whose thought is only matched by the sincerity of his compassion for his people. This slim volume, which is commemorative of the 70th birth anniversary of President Premadasa, will hopefully be followed by others. In and of itself, it contains the fundamentals of his thought and should be our constant companion and guide in the tortuous years of struggle ahead. For those who ask what Premadasa policies are and wonder whether there are any such things, they need look no further than this booklet for a definitive reply.



Ranil Wickremesinghe

Prime Minister

INTRODUCTION

We have begun to write the legend of Ranasinghe Premadasa. He devised a far-sighted plan for the prosperity of our people and launched a gigantic campaign to achieve this goal.

He was a leader who gave all his strength, wisdom and enthusiasm to this task of liberating the people from poverty.

His lofty virtues, particularly the benevolence and warm affection towards our people, were immense.

We appreciate the efforts of our editors who have chosen a very small portion of Ranasinghe Premadasa's storehouse of concepts, for this booklet, which is the inaugural publication of the Premadasa Centre.

I wish to point out that the path to arrive at the goals set forth here, has been already indicated by Ranasinghe Premadasa in his Manifesto 'A New Vision & A New Deal'.



B. Sirisena Cooray

Chairman, Premadasa Centre



NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

*"However far, however close or however powerful
any nation may be, it has no right to aspire to control
other nations."*



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There is no sense in my becoming President if I am to surrender the independence of my motherland or if I am to allow it to be divided into pieces. For the sake of remaining as President or for the sake of personal gain, I shall not betray my motherland. I have not inherited such treacherous qualities. I have no intention of passing down such a shameful reputation to my descendants either.

(Special Sessions of the party on 6th October, 1988 at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium)

We appreciate assistance from anywhere. But how can legitimate Governments, deriving their sovereignty from their people, accept fetters on their freedom from outside? We must be alert to the danger of a new colonialism, wrapped in spurious moral considerations, emanating from alien cultures.

(Address at the Opening Session of the Sixth SAARC Summit held in Colombo - 21st Dec. 91)

We may be a small nation in numbers and hardly count in military capability and economic strength, but let none underestimate our moral stature and our sense of national dignity. We can summon a moral strength that can put at nought tanks and heavy guns. We have already demonstrated this to be true.

(A Charter for Democracy)

I am not anti-Indian. I am only anti occupation of my native soil by any foreign troops. It does not matter who the offending party is. I cannot consent to, I will not allow, any foreign military presence in my country.

("A Charter for democracy in Sri Lanka")

Having a foreign force in an independent country is a slur on its self respect. It devalues the freedom of a country.

(At the Pinnacle Unveiling Ceremony at the Chittavivekashramaya - 1.6.89.)

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We welcome encouragement, assistance and support from abroad. But we will never compromise our sovereignty or sell our independence to anyone. However far, however close, or however powerful any nation may be, it has no right to aspire to control other nations. It has no right to dictate our policies or maintain an unwelcome presence on our soil. The blood of Sri Lankans, past and present, has not been shed to subordinate our country.

(1989.9.22)

Let not any foreign power meddle in our internal affairs.

(A Charter for Democracy)

It is these same imperatives, sanctity of territorial sovereignty and integrity, which lead the government and the people of Sri Lanka to condemn interference by major powers in the affairs of smaller states. Whether this interference is in Central Asia, Central America or the Caribbean, it is unjustified. The existence of governments or the assumption of office by governments which are disliked by their neighbours, is no excuse for overt or covert intervention. External invasion, subversion or destabilization is the theft of decision making from citizens of the nation. We in the Non Aligned Movement may only be able to resist these intrusions with words. But let the words ring loud and clear - interference is wrong; interference is unprincipled; interference must stop.

(8th NAM Conference - Harare, Zimbabwe - 3.9.86.)



NEW THINKING

'What we need is not so much answers to our old questions; we must start to question our old answers.'

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My objective is not the defeat of anyone. My objective is to ensure victory for everyone. Inflicting defeat is easy; ensuring victory is not so easy. We have been weakened by dissension and disunity. We have been weakened by tension and turmoil. We have been weakened by intrigue and disharmony. We have been weakened by disorder and indiscipline. My mission is to lift our people out of this abyss of weakness and defeatism. I dedicate myself to lead my people to unity and amity. I dedicate myself to lead my people to calmness and sanity. I dedicate myself to lead my people to peace and harmony. I dedicate myself to lead my people to order and discipline. This is the only victory worth winning - the conquest of disunity, the conquest of deprivation and the conquest of despair.

(Address to the Nation on 2nd January 1989 from the Historic Octagon of Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy.)

Today, we live in societies where passions are easily inflamed. The results of emotion destroying logic are all around us. Violence, inhumanity and brutality are visible consequences of emotionalism. In this sea of passion we need to raise the standard of reason. We need to respond to the call of balance and impartiality.

(Inauguration of the First Annual Session of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka and the National Law Conference - 31st August, 1990)

We have been fighting a war against want. We have been fighting a war against illiteracy, illness, hunger and want. That war cannot be fought with arms. That war can be won only through self sacrifice and self-reliance. (23.6.87)

Today, we are on the threshold of a new era. It is abundantly evident that the old ways of administration do not work. It is even more evident that the old ways of thinking about society do not work. The choice is clear. Either we continue the old



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ways and collapse or we restructure through a new approach and survive. That is why our Government has begun a policy of restructuring; that is why we seek and implement new pathways... The revolution we have begun will take time to complete. We want non-violent change. We must transform attitudes and institutions. Above all we will do this with the participation of every segment of our people. A great deal of reform is necessary. Policy, not private preferences, must govern decisions. Principles, not personal considerations, must guide those entrusted with executive office at every level.

(125th Anniversary Celebrations of the CMC - 15.12.90).

To my mind, one of the principal tasks for those of us in government is to create the kind of environment that kindles a sense of adventure in society. In this way, we will be able to make life more meaningful. In this way we will be able to provide an exciting counter-force to the attractive negativisms which beguile so many people in modern times. If we are able to achieve this spirit of creative ferment, the energies of individuals will be drawn into constructive participation in society.

(28.7.86).

But while we all deplore the violence, there is no point in being moralistic and judgemental of one side or of the other. Rather, it is for us, the living, to understand the causes, the underlying causes, and work towards their removal. It is not for us to point fingers or to score cheap debating points.

Rather, it is for us to see that we pull together to eliminate for all time, the roots - the political, the social, the economic, the cultural and indeed the spiritual roots - that brought forth the terror. Let them not forget that the dead and the living have

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been alike - often the helpless victims of forces far beyond their capacity to control.

(A Charter for Democracy)

The present problems of the world and particularly of our regions are complex and complicated. We have to realize that religious rituals and ceremonies alone cannot save humanity. We have to concern ourselves with larger issues of politics and economics.

(At the inauguration of the Asian Buddhist Congress, BMICH - 24.3.90)

The world is constantly changing. Man is also in a constant state of change. In an ever changing world, we too have to adapt ourselves. We must understand the current situation and change. New problems require new solutions. Old solutions will not suit new problems.

(6.9.1989)

We must seize this opportunity. We must reconstruct. We must renew what is meaningful and forward looking. We must discard what has retarded progress.

(At the 125th Anniversary of the C.M.C. - 15.12.90)

It is not a society divided on grounds of race, caste, class or party that we want to create. Our attempt is to create a society, where in the midst of all these differences which would add beauty like many-splendoured flowers, we would be able to remain united, help each other and co-exist.

(91.1.13)

How can we develop the maturity and the capacity to control reactions to events? They come from a realistic sense of propor-



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tion about one's own importance. If we learn to take our tasks more seriously and ourselves less seriously, we will be able to fashion a more understanding and less dangerous reaction to our problems.

(1.11.86)

Participation is encouraged when people feel that government is humane, close and caring. Full democracy requires decentralised administration. Responsive government must reach the people where they are. It must answer their needs on the spot. This is one way in which we can involve young men and women in public life. We must engage their energies and enthusiasm in positive patriotic activities.

(Address to the Nation on 2nd January 1989 from the Historic Octagon of Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy.)

Every new concept is bound to encounter problems. That does not devalue the concept. We have to balance the problems against the overall gain. The overall gain is that it helps to bridge the gulf between the administration and the people. It involves the administration in the people, and the people in the administration. It breaks down alienation. I think it is a major step towards extending, enriching and protecting democracy.

(A Charter for Democracy - on the Presidential Mobile Services)

From time to time crises occur in the world. These crises give birth to new eras in the world. In the process of grappling with crises, we make adjustments and changes both in our organizations and institutions and also in our attitudes. In Sri Lanka today, we are facing a grave crisis. Now we must think of making adjustments and changes which will enable us to face the challenges posed by it. We will not be able to retain certain of our systems any further. Simply because we have had them

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all along with us, we will not be able to retain them with us indefinitely. We must adjust ourselves in the way necessary to survive the crises. Crises in fact can open the door to a new era. That is the nature of the onward march of the world. We have to adjust ourselves to the new era.

(24.6.86)

We must also ponder why it has been found difficult to create a morally upright society through the system we have been using for over 30 years.... We have been forced to condone wrongs done by our own party people. We shut our eyes to crimes committed because the miscreant is a Member of our Group or Party. We sometimes have to support the unsuitable man because he is the man of the Party. So disregarding the public good, we have to take his side and support him because he belongs to our own party. Is this the correct system? Can we expect to bring purity to public life through a policy like this?

(24.6.86)

The people who were earlier at the helm of affairs of this country neglected very important courses of action that they should have taken in the interests of the people. Now when we have started implementing those courses of action and programs, it would certainly be a service by the people of this country to point out honestly any shortcomings in them.

(Speech at the Gam Udawa '91 Exhibition - Kamburupitiya - 23.6.91)

I am quite prepared to concede that like other governments in the past, the governments of which I was a member contributed in no small way to the crisis of our society.... History did not begin in 1977. The roots of the crisis go much further back. Responsibility has to be shared over a much wider front.

(A Charter for Democracy)



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There are some, who, without examining the problems of youth today, hasten to criticise and denounce them. I think that it is wrong to do so. The problems of youth today cannot be solved by criticism and denunciation. It can only be done by understanding and action. We must not be diverted from the roots of the problem by looking at its side effects or by-products. Criticising and denouncing these will not enable us to solve the problem.

(20.9.87)

We need a massive programme to make the age gap and the wage gap diminish. We must take away the venom of hatred and replace it with satisfaction for youthful energy.

(Ibid)

We need to restore the use of English to its rightful place as a means of access to knowledge and commerce. But not as the exclusive privilege of a small coterie of our society. The answer to this problem is actually to widen the access to English, and provide the greatest possible opportunities for acquiring competence in it.

English is an instrument of modernization. Properly used it can be an instrument of liberation. We want English for its instrumental value, not as a mean of keeping our minds in subjection.

(A Charter for Democracy)

The group of youth between the ages of 18 and 35 is a very potent force. We must harness their talents and capabilities. It is our bounden duty to give these youths who are the products of the free education system, economic strength.

(At the 35th Annual Convention of the U.N.P. - 17.12.89)

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Countries should adapt themselves to the changing needs so as to meet the new challenges they face.

(Ibid)

One of the most important needs of Sri Lanka today is discipline. As individuals we are people of excellence. There is no task that some Sri Lankans, at home or abroad, cannot do and do well. Yet we often lack the capacity to work together, to co-operate, to collaborate. If we are to build our motherland, if we want a society which can give everyone a fair deal, we must learn and practice collective discipline.

(91.2.1)

In the world and in our country, we live at a time of great transition. Old structures and systems are changing. Old attitudes and old approaches are inadequate to meet new challenges. Unless we respond to these challenges, we will not be able to compete in a highly competitive world. Unless we respond, we will not be able to deliver the satisfactions of life to our people.

(Ibid)

From these recent experiences, our society must also learn some important lessons. To avoid more tragedies in the future, we need to meet the genuine aspirations of youth. We must ensure that young people participate in the decision making of our country. We must assure them a decent standard of living. We must assure them opportunities for self fulfilment.

(Ibid)

Our task is to reach down to the underprivileged and reach across to our neighbours.

(Ibid)



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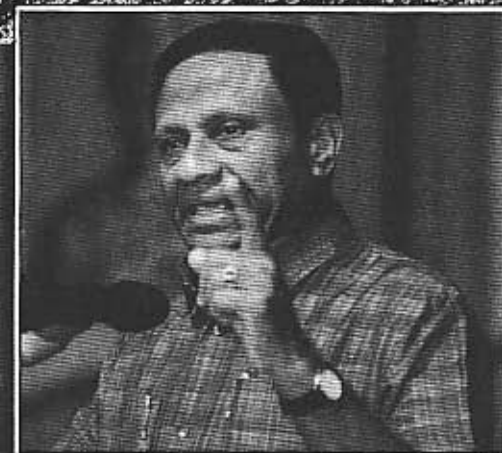
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It is not enough to enforce change. Change must be a change of heart if it is to endure.

(22.9.89)

Our country today is facing a national crisis. It is a crisis which has shaken the very foundations of democracy and human rights and is threatening to destroy them. No sacrifice would be too big for the democratic parties to make for the resolution of this crisis in order to save the democratic way of life which we all cherish. It is with an open mind and an unprejudiced approach that we must find solutions. Let us first understand the causes underlying this crisis. It is necessary that we should consult and seek the views of all concerned. It is difficult to find a solution while holding on tenaciously to our prejudices and pre-conceived notions. It is always more fruitful to diagnose the root causes of the disease and treat it effectively rather than to do a patchwork job on identification of symptoms.

(At the Govt. Parliamentary Group Meeting - 5.9.89)



POVERTY

'Poverty is the greatest social disease of many countries. It has reached epidemic proportions in much of the Third World. Epidemics are emergencies. Emergencies do not have the luxury of leisurely solutions.'



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Among the central common questions which afflict our region is poverty. Deprivation anywhere in South Asia means insecurity everywhere in South Asia.

(Address at the Opening Session of the Sixth SAARC Summit held in Colombo - 21.12. 91)

Poverty alleviation means making the weak and the poor strong and capable. Even though poor, our people have many talents and capabilities. But they do not have the basic facilities necessary to fully exploit these talents and capabilities. It is to fulfil that need that we are implementing the Janasaviya Programme.

(Address on Janasaviya on Sri Lanka Rupavahini - 4.9.1989)

From a distance, Janasaviya may appear to be over-ambitious. Those who know our people, who know their character, who know their talent, will never think so. Why is there so much poverty? Poverty is not a birthright of Sri Lankans. We are not a country in which much poverty should exist. Why, then, is poverty such a concern? It is a concern because our people have lacked opportunity. Janasaviya gives them that opportunity. Ambition is no fault when it is applied to relieving the misery of the masses.

Only when poverty is no more will we truly be a liberated society. It is with this hope that I wish the Janasaviya Trust Fund all success in the future. The hopes of many rest on the outcome of the Janasaviya effort. It is a sacred trust to which we must all dedicate ourselves. No political, class, communal, caste or religious barriers must impede the progress of our country. That is the Janasaviya commitment. It will be kept.

(Address at the Inauguration of the Janasaviya Trust Fund - 25.5.1991 - BMICH, Colombo.)

What we are trying is to grant equal rights and social equality

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to the people of this country. Our answer to the question whether we are to keep our innocent masses in eternal poverty and as a people eternally engaged in hired labour is, no.

(May Day 1992)

I consider it a crime to tolerate poverty in any society....

Janasaviya is not a dole or merely a welfare programme. Its primary purpose is the activation of people. It enables them to participate in production and share in its benefits. Janasaviya also seeks to make people self reliant, acquire a new confidence and become actors in their own destiny. It seeks to break down alienation and involve people in the social process.

(A Charter for Democracy)

All programmes aimed at improving the condition of the poor should be progressively interwoven and pursued as an integral part of overall strategies."

(At the Sixth Session of the UN Commission on Human Settlements - Helsinki - 25.4.83)

Because of Janasaviya a large number of people could get interested in development work. We can involve the people in various rural development programmes at village level. Today the poor have no strength to get involved in them. They are very weak. We have our housing programme. We can easily bring in the Janasaviya recipients into that programme. Today there is a programme to alienate land to those who do not have land. These people too could be brought into that programme.

(4.9.89.)

However much we launch programmes of health and education, however much roads, bridges, culverts, schools and hospitals are constructed, however much programmes are formulated for housing development, if the underprivileged cannot



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arise on their own strength, they will not benefit from these programmes. Even if they are involved, they will not be able to achieve any self advancement.

(4.9.89.)

If we detect some kind of disease on a tea leaf, in a tea bush, we do research to find out why the leaves are dying. We get advice from the Tea Research Institute and provide the necessary treatment and nourishment to the tea bush. Similarly there is the Rubber Research Institute to look into the weakness of a rubber tree and the Coconut Research Institute to look after the coconut tree. Not only nationally, we would do research internationally to find a remedy to the defects. Consider for a moment whether we do such research and care for our biggest asset - human resources. Whether we give the same care and attention to the human being as we give the tender tea leaves, rubber tree, the coconut tree or ears of paddy - though it is a human being who produces all these plantation crops? No. We have not treated the human being even as an object - not even to the extent we treat an agricultural product. We have got used to treating the poor as a set of worthless beings.

(4.9.89)

Janasaviya brings the poor into the economic life of the country. It is a democratisation process. Large numbers who have been excluded from productive activity will now participate. They will participate in economic life. They will also begin to participate more meaningfully in political, social life and cultural life. This is a liberating movement.

(25.5.91)

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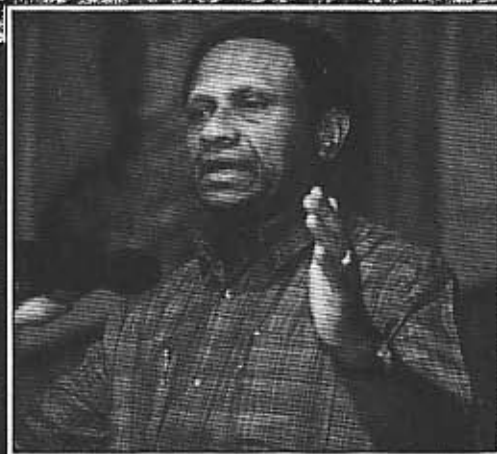
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Poverty has a direct bearing on children's welfare. Poverty in fact, is the chief enemy of children. Hunger, disease, illiteracy and may I say, a lack of hope, arise out of poverty. We shall overcome these obstacles.We will give pride of place to our children and their well being. Our people and our children must live. They need not die for lack of food or lack of water or lack of medicine. Our children need not grow in a situation of illiteracy. They need not be neglected. They need not be abused. Today, we dedicate ourselves to provide and to protect the "father of man" - the child.

(Address at the SAARC Conference on Children at the BMICH on 16th September, 1992)

Poverty is the greatest social disease of many countries. It has reached epidemic proportions in much of the Third World. Epidemics are emergencies. Emergencies do not have the luxury of leisurely solutions.

(Address at the inauguration of the JTF - 25.5.91 -BMICH)



A NEW DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

"There is no meaning in any development that keeps the people in hunger....."

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I have always maintained that human beings are our greatest resource. Unfortunately, it has not been fully utilized. Our people have great ability and talent. They are very practical and pragmatic in their approach. It may be that all of them are not well educated. However, with little effort, they can be trained to pick up anything. In fact, our people are very creative. They can produce the most wonderful things.

(Address at the 14th Annual District Convention of the Lions International District 306B - BMICH - 2nd May, 1992.)

....Whatever development we may bring about should be to the benefit of the poor. Development in any sense should help people live. Our party is aware that there is no meaning in any development that keeps the people in hunger and in malnutrition, leading to death. If hunger cannot be eliminated through science, and if it cannot eliminate sickness and physical weakness, we have no need for that science. If technology cannot eliminate poverty, unemployment, want, we have no need for that technology. If the scientists and the technologists cannot provide relief to the poor, what need has humanity for such a scientist or technologist!

(Providing Assets to the Assetless - 13.2.89)

If our democracy was to survive, indeed if society itself was to survive, we had to tackle the issue of poverty directly, without waiting for the benefits of growth to trickle down.... I realised that if we merely waited for trickle down to work, the very engines of production, and democracy itself, would be destroyed. I saw a rising discontentment, especially amongst the youth.

(A Charter for Democracy)



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I am a firm believer in entrepreneurial activity. However, you must not interpret this to mean that I am a champion of old style capitalism. If anything, I am for economic democracy.

(A Charter for Democracy)

A nation is like a pyramid. The strength and the majesty of the pyramid are embodied in its broad foundation and solid base. Whatever is too heavy must collapse. We must realise that everyone big and everything big is supported from the base provided by everyone small and everything small. We fail to realise that the big cannot survive without the small. After all the millions of small people - the workers and the peasants - are the hardcore of our society. They are the very foundations of our country.

(23.6.87)

Until recently we failed to understand a critical lesson of the Industrial Revolution. Things once considered high luxury items were now available to the people at low cost. Why did this happen? It was no miracle. It was largely due to increased productivity. That increased productivity depended heavily on worker education and knowledge. In Sri Lanka, some had foolish notions that education was unnecessary for workers. Some believed that a relatively uneducated working class was beneficial to the economy. How wrong and immature these ideas are. Regretfully, there are still some backward people who are wedded to these misguided approaches. However, they will fail because they will be left behind in the march of progress. Neither workers nor governments will now tolerate those who obstruct development. The march of progress is a path which no country can ignore. The march of progress is

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necessary to give the people an improved standard of living. The pace of that march will be determined by the way in which the spirit of co-operation, fairness and higher education is integrated into the national economy.

(At the Convocation of Institute of Worker Education - 6.7.87).

The creativity and labour of the people are the primary resources. Money, foreign aid and machinery are clearly secondary, though necessary resources. Minimal solutions to many, rather than higher standards for a few, will be our vision for the immediate future.

(Learning, Unlearning and Relearning - 9.12.90)

The popularization and the peoplization of science and technology must be encouraged.

(6.12.90)

If the affluent nations of the world realize that the good life of plenty cannot be long sustained at the expense of mass deprivation, a new partnership for development can be forged. This is the message of all the great faiths of humanity. It is a call we ignore at our peril.

(12.10.87)

The exploitation which leads to poverty is endemic in the structure of international economic relations today. That is why this structure has to be changed. That is why we talk of New International Economic Order. It is an order where human rights are respected; where economic inequalities and poverty are eliminated; where malnutrition and illiteracy are removed. I am not talking of a new order which must exist between nations and nations only. We have to institute this order in our own countries. We cannot have world peace without being at



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peace ourselves - in our country, within our society, within our family, and, if I may say so, within each of us ourselves.

We cannot have a New International Economic Order abroad and an Old Economic Order of Exploitation at home. We cannot ask for the removal of exploitation and inequalities among nations and allow economic oppression and disparities to flourish within our nation.

The emancipation of mankind from exploitation must take place both nationally and internationally. The structural imbalances and inequalities within nations are linked together. That is as true for the South as it is for the North. There are many glass houses. Let us change these houses. Let us also not throw stones.

(Udagama Udanaya)

We are not only developing societies, we are developing people. That is why Shelter is not merely construction - it is a moral crusade.

(At the 10th Commemorative Session of the UN Commission on Human Settlements. Nairobi, Kenya. 6.4.87)

Development necessarily involves change and therefore a choice of alternatives or a choice between several options.

(At the Asia Society - New York - 30.9.80.)

First provide the people with the necessary nutrition for their physical wellbeing. There after let the people provide the nutrition necessary for increased production. It is only in that way that the country's economy can be strengthened and the income of the income-earners can be raised and a better standard of living can be assured.

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We must consider our open economy as a competitive economy. Through that competitiveness we hope to give, provide benefits, profits and relief to the people.

(16.3.90)

These people may not be having money, land or other material sources. But their intelligence is vital and their labour is vital and have to be given their proper value. Today, even the disabled are not idling saying that they are cripples or are blind. They are making an effort to be useful citizens. We have to be fair by them.

(13.1.91)

Work, labour, toil - whatever you may call it - there is no nobler task to which one can dedicate oneself. Work for one's self, one's country, work for others - they are rewarding as well as elevating. As human beings, work is our lot. We in Sri Lanka have earned a much-deserved reputation for intelligence and ingenuity. Let us now strive to gain the same reputation for hard and sustained work as well.

(29.10.79)

If we are not prepared to care for others and share with others, economic development by itself is meaningless to our people.

(20.10.79)

We don't want development on the basis of caste distinctions or racial differences. We want development arising out of unity and discipline. A prosperity born of harmony and discipline.

(6.12.79)

Goods are not more important than the people who created goods. Otherwise people become slaves.

(6.12.79)



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We in the developing countries are not asking for charity on a global scale. We do not believe that poverty can be alleviated by charity. It must be eliminated by removing exploitation.

You cannot make everyone and every country equal. You can give everyone and every country an equal opportunity.

(At the 35th Session of the UN General Assembly - Sept. 1980)

Development is not a privilege. It is a human right.

(At the 11th Session of the UN Commission on Human Settlements - New Delhi - 6th April 1988)

Development and production must be for the well-being of the common people. The well-being of the people should not be sacrificed at any cost. If necessary, we may even sacrifice development and production for the well-being of the people.

(19.5.87)

To symbolize the drama that is latent in the shelter area, we need to develop an event or an idea that will focus the attention of the world and encourage the participation of young people. We have seen this happen recently in the case of Africa. Rock music and road runners brought a sense of drama to a worthy cause. I ask you all to give this concept your most serious thought. Let us share ideas in order to bring new life to our efforts.

(Address at the International Shelter Seminar - MIT, USA)

Shelter is not charity - it is necessity. Shelter must liberate - not suffocate. Shelter programmes must create hope in dwellings - not allow people to dwell in hope. Shelter must mobilize the social dynamic against the dynamite in Society.

(Ibid)

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Workers' housing provides a valuable opportunity for strengthening the base of development in Third World countries like ours. Every such opportunity must be seized. For that is what development is all about. It is about laying strong foundations. And what better foundation is there than to attend to the shelter needs of basic producers? After all, their creative hands and minds help produce our economic wealth.

(Address made at the ILO Tripartite Round Table on Workers Housing - 16.3.87)

We must never forget one basic truth of development; knowledge of files, institutions and bureaucracies is no substitute for the wisdom of poor people.

(25.5.91)

We as a government cannot claim credit for this. It was and it is a peoples' effort. We mobilized. We assisted. But it was the people who provided the manpower. It was the people who provided the enthusiasm. It was the people who participated with unprecedented commitment. Why is that? Why are the people so keen to participate? The answer is very simple. It is because they are consulted. It is because they are involved. It is because they benefit directly.

(Speech at the Gam Udawa 91 Exhibition - Kamburupitiya - 23.6.91)

Development need not be tedious. Development need not be boring. If it is to succeed, it must be enjoyable. It must be interesting. It must be appealing to everyone.

(Ibid)

For the first time in our modern history, the Village Reawakening Movement puts decision-making into the villages. It puts



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decision making into the hands of the underprivileged. Sitting in offices in Colombo, doing paper work and giving directions, is the worst method of development. We can never develop our country that way. This is something our local bureaucrats and foreign advisers must understand.

(Ibid)

The vast majority of our people have to work very hard for their living. They have not inherited wealth. They have not become rich by cheating and exploiting others. They have not abused public trust. They do not try to manipulate the opinions of others for their financial or political gains. The vast majority of our people are decent. They are peace-loving. All they want is an opportunity to improve their lives. My government is fully committed to giving them this opportunity.

(Ibid)

Every major economic organization or enterprise must utilize the energies and resources of millions of ordinary men and women, especially the youth. Only if it's broad based benefits are made available can narrow based major organizations survive. Otherwise, the big become the natural target of the small.

(20.9.87)

If the scientist and the technologist cannot provide relief to the poor what need has humanity for such a scientist or technologist! The poor people are served better by buffaloes, draught cattle and pack bulls. We can imagine how these innocent animals serve humanity without any knowledge of science or technology. If as the result of the modern inventions of the scientist, the fertility of the soil dwindles, and herbs, fruit and

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vegetation in general are poisoned, wouldn't that scientist amount to a murderer? If as a result of the technologist people are thrown out of employment, wouldn't that technologist be an enemy of the people and not a friend? If the products of scientists and technologists are weapons of destruction and not products that help people live, what use is there of that science and technology to humanity?

(At the Gam Udawa 88 - Anamaduwu - 3.7.88)

The modern world brags about the new successes in science and technology and the use of modern machinery and equipment. If that science and technology were meant to benefit man, how is it that poverty is increasing and hunger is increasing and sicknesses are increasing and malnutrition is increasing day by day?

The industrialized countries are becoming richer and richer while small countries like ours are becoming poorer and poorer. While our people are looking on in hunger as a result of the science and technology that have been introduced to us, the fertile soil of our earth is being destroyed through fertilizers and machinery; the environment is being polluted. What we need is science and technology that help people live. Therefore, we should tell all those who give us aid to give that aid immediately, so that we would be able to get over our difficulties and poverty. Sometimes we are told, as if in sympathy with us, that aid is being given in many millions so that the benefits of that aid will accrue ten or fifteen years later. We should be careful in receiving such aid. We should tell those who offer such aid that what we need is aid to solve our immediate problems and that we cannot wait too long, for half our people are on the brink of utter devastation.

(Ibid)



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Yet the implementation of numerous development strategies has not corrected the basic condition. Indeed, in many regions of the world, the human plight has worsened. To some this is a situation of hopelessness. To others, this is evidence of the inevitable and irretrievable march of human or government folly. We must reject these doctrines of despair. What is hopeless are the approaches of the past. What is inevitable and irretrievable is their failure. What we need is not so much answers to our old questions. We must start to question our old answers.

(14.7.87)

What is that future? What sort of Sri Lanka do we want to create? What sort of motherland do we want to leave for our children? We must strive to build a fair society for all. This means a society in which everyone is provided with the tools and the opportunity for advancement. The tools the State must provide are - security, education, social justice, access to opportunity. But, seizing opportunity is a task for the individual. Hard work, enterprise and competence are attributes of character. The State must open doors that have been closed for too long in our country. Then, personal effort will bring its own reward.

(Annual Conference of the Judicial Service Association of Sri Lanka - 30.11.90)

We have chosen to learn directly from the people. We have learnt that the finest investment is in people; in poor people. We have learnt how to learn. That has meant a lot of unlearning. But what the people have achieved is so sound and so substantial. We have called this the "new professionalism". It is a more challenging professionalism than the old, because it demands a holistic and personalised attention to the needs of each individual human being. The new professionalism cannot be packaged. It

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has to be creative, humanistic and open-ended, ready to respond to an infinite variety of needs and contexts.

(19.9.87)

The context of development has changed. So our task is to fashion a new approach.

(At the 16th Congress of the International Union of Architects - Brighton, U.K. - 14.7.87)

Shelter provides us with a field in which idealism and realism can blend to the advantage of us all. That is why I believe that shelter can bring forth the best in human cooperation.

(Ibid)

The grand designs of economic strategists scarcely touched this devastating plight of the poor and ill sheltered.

(At the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless - 1987 - U.N., New York - 12.10.87.)

A New International Spatial Order will have a transcending impact on human values and aspirations. It can give new life to that old and central institution called the family, the most primary of all human organizations. It can provide and engender a multitude of other development efforts. Above all, it can bring a vibrancy to life in the poorest regions of our planet and hope to those who live there.

(Ibid)

The Million Houses Programme marks a fundamental reversal of roles between government and community. The state has joined the process of the people, instead of inviting the people to join a process of the state.

(19.9.87)

Real development is finding ways and means of getting the people to stand on their own feet.

(19.5.87)



DEMOCRACY

"Democracy is about people"

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We were also deceived and misled to believe the J.V.P. was working with a genuine desire and feeling to give true leadership to the younger generation and the poor and downtrodden. You all know how we always paid attention to their declared aims of working for the people. It is because of this that I decided to give them a chance when I was elected President. Within 11 days of my taking office as President I removed the state of emergency and released 1800 J.V.P. ers who were in custody, despite advice to the contrary by the Police and Armed Services chiefs. I did so to test the genuineness of the J.V.P. and its leader Rohana Wijeweera.

(Galewela - 23.2.91)

We extended the hand of friendship both to the JVP and the LTTE. We invited the JVP to enter the democratic process. We called them to the Conference table where problems could be discussed and solutions sought in a civilised manner. They saw humaneness as a sign of weakness. The JVP rejected our hand of friendship. The common people of our country demanded the restoration of law and order. The brave members of our three Security Services and the Police were compelled to comply with this call of the nation. They suppressed the terror. 1989 was devoted mainly for this purpose. Millions of peace loving and law abiding citizens were saved from the JVP brutality.

(Address to the Parliament - 1991 April 19th)

I think the JVP's aim to overhaul the system was a good one, and I was broadly in sympathy with that ideal. But I totally disagreed with their choice of strategies and their commitment to violence and terror. I saw in their idealism and in their commitment a great potential which we could harness to the democratic process in order to speed up change. That was why, even



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in the run up to the Presidential elections, even though my supporters were being murdered brutally, I never condemned or even criticised the JVP. I was prepared to wait, hoping that they would change. I am personally very sad that such idealism, such commitment had to be wasted

(A Charter for Democracy in Sri Lanka)

We must salute our people for the brave and courageous manner in which they safeguarded democracy when it faced a grave threat in the recent past. They united to safeguard democracy despite the difficulties they faced, forgetting all differences they had. Whenever heart rendering slogans were put forward, they rejected them and safeguarded democracy. When slogans were shouted to destroy democracy and support 'liberation', they took the side of democracy. Therefore, it is our duty to safeguard the people who withstood all threats and helped democracy to triumph.

((At the Puttalam District Presidential Mobile Ministry - 16.3.90))

My understanding of democracy is that it is more than merely holding elections as required under the constitution. Of course that is the very minimum. And that I guarantee. But democracy must mean more than that.

In order for democracy to really work, we must provide the maximum opportunities for the largest possible number of people to participate in the making of decisions that affect their lives. Democracy is about people. People must have access to the institutions that shape and implement policies.

And by people I mean more than just the representatives they elect once in every five or six years. By people, I mean the ordinary, anonymous people who live in our towns and countryside. I mean the silent masses. They must be given the

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opportunity to participate in government.

(A Charter for Democracy)

Constitutional provisions alone can never guarantee democracy. Only an enlightened people can do that. People must know what democracy means. They must acquire experience in managing it, in resolving the problems it generates. They must have a stake in it. Only then will they fight for it.

(Ibid)

It was the innocent people of this country who went to the polls on that occasion and cast their votes, amidst all kinds of difficulties. Entire families were being slaughtered and houses were being put to the torch. It was no ordinary election. That, I shall never forget. Who were the people who dared to vote? Under what conditions did they go to the polling booths? It was under wholly abnormal conditions and in the face of relentless terror that the people of this country elected me at that Presidential Election. Never will I be able to forget it. If the election could not be held at that time, one could imagine the situation the country could have faced. The country would have been plunged into a dictatorship of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, similar to that under Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy and Tojo in Japan.

(Galewela - 23.2.91)

I believe that the greatest asset we have is our people, and the best defender of our democracy are an enlightened populace.

(A Charter for Democracy)

The only way to arrest alienation, distrust and indifference is to increase involvement. We must return government to the people. When you feel that you have a share in government, it becomes your own.

(The 125th Anniversary of the Colombo Municipal Council - 15th December 1990)



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Effective democracy must effectively improve the quality and the services of government.

(Ibid)

People-based and people-concerned Local Government is our aim.

(Ibid)

Let us not hesitate to innovate. Through creative reform we can develop a caring, people-concerned Local Government.

(Ibid)

By Human Rights I understand the rights of all human beings to those opportunities for a full life, referred to in the UN Declaration on Human Rights. These rights have to be guaranteed firstly by the State. But the State alone cannot guarantee them. They have also to be guaranteed by society as a whole. Likewise they can be threatened not only by the State. Segments of the society also can threaten them.

We do not have to make apologies to anyone for the steps we took to protect democracy. What the international community can do to strengthen human rights in Sri Lanka is to enable us to overcome poverty. The underlying problem is poverty. The problem of human rights cannot be resolved merely at the level of rules and regulations. Ultimately we have to beat poverty.

(A Charter for Democracy)

Normally we think of the threat to human rights as coming only from the State. In this instance, human rights were being denied and trampled upon systematically by certain political groups who adopted violence and terror as an ideology.

(Ibid)



THE ETHNIC PROBLEM

"The history and future of Sri Lanka does not belong to any group"



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The disease of division must be purged from our society. Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher must live together in concord. Discrimination must perish. Democracy must flourish. No human group is free from problems. But, those problems must not be life-threatening. They must be resolved through consultation, compromise and consensus. What other way is there to build a free and fair society? There is no other message that comes to me from the wisdom of the ages.

(Annual Conference of the Judicial Service Association of Sri Lanka - Savsiripaya - 30th November, 1990)

All must resolve to usher in a new era in our country and that can be built only on a basis of trust. We must realize that the Sinhala Buddhists of this country who form 75% of the population bear the utmost responsibility in realizing this objective. All the other sections constitute only 25% of the population. Towards this 25% we must develop brotherly feelings. If not, only 75% of everything is left to us and nothing more. If we are to safeguard the unitary state of our country, we, 75% of the people, must be kindly disposed towards the balance 25% and mete out justice to them. We must treat the 25% of the minorities in a way so that they have confidence in us. If not, the country would be divided. There is no point in talking about unity then. We tried out the experiment once by military action, which resulted in the entire country being virtually set in flames. The next step was getting one of world's greatest armies to operate since 1987. That too failed. We should understand that situation.

(Noble Task of Newspapers - 60th Anniversary Celebrations of the Silumina newspaper - 24.3.90)

We stand for a Sri Lanka in which every ethnic group and every religious denomination are equal partners with one another.

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We are determined to break away from the past and cut through years of prejudice and suspicion. We are ready to make the necessary accommodations and compromise. There is no other road towards prosperity. There is no other road towards a united Sri Lanka. Foreign forces came to the North and East because of our disunity.

(The Address to the Parliament - 19th April, 1991)

Part of our cultural heritage is a pluralist society. Sri Lanka has always had many ethnic groups, many religions, and many social traditions. Our country and its integrity as a country does not depend on uniformity. The history and the future of Sri Lanka does not belong to any group. Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Malays and Burghers have equal places in our society. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are all religions of Sri Lanka. Any Government that is committed to a free and united Sri Lanka must be committed to these concepts. All future governments should protect this diversity.

(90.11.12.)

The fundamental rights of all who live in the country must be promoted and protected. No section of our community must have the perception that they are alienated or marginalised on grounds of political ideology, race, religion, class or sex. All are agreed that this has to be so in a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual society such as ours.

(All Parties Conference - 1989.9.13.)

Today, the people working in the estates are not only people of Indian origin. They are all people of Sri Lanka. We will make no discrimination among them. They will not be discriminated against on grounds of race. They are all citizens of Sri Lanka.



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There were times when they were considered people of Indian origin. Today, under our citizenship laws, all of them have become citizens of this country.

Tea, rubber and coconut are crops that bring us the revenue for our country. People serving in these estates toil and sweat to strengthen the economy of our country. We will not therefore discriminate on grounds of race, religion, caste, class or even party politics.

(Inaugurating the 2nd Presidential Mobile Service - Rahula College, Matara - 3rd Nov. 1989)

Wherever may be our present place of living, we must cherish the development and welfare of all areas of the country with an equal concern. Whatever the place we live in, we receive sustenance from other parts of the country as well. It is not only things produced in the areas we live in which help to keep our lives going.

(23.12.89)

The sad and tragic events of last July are still fresh and searing in our minds. Thousands of innocent people were made to undergo needless suffering and pain of mind. We humiliated ourselves in our own eyes and in the eyes of the rest of the world. What was the basic cause for all this? It was the handwork of a relatively small section of our people who could not, or who failed to, distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. They were unable to answer the moral questions before them.

(Speech made at the 39th Sessions of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science at the BMICH - 12.12.83.)

As human beings of whatever race, religion, colour or creed, have a right to fulfil their lives in terms of their respective cultures. The obligation of the State is to provide the framework

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under which all its citizen may exercise their right. Then we will have created a multi ethnic democratic society.

(A Charter for Democracy)

Ultimately, Sinhala and Tamil people must learn to become one people through a knowledge and practice of each other's language and culture. Only then will they become one nation, a Sri Lankan people.

(Ibid)

I believe that the ethnic question came up partly because of feelings of alienation among the vast majority of Sinhala people. Sinhala villagers felt increasingly shut out from power and privilege which continued to be enjoyed by the few. These feelings of being denied access to a better life took on an ethnic character, when some of our leaders found it expedient to divert their emotions along ethnic lines. This caused untold damage and suffering to the whole nation.

(Ibid)

We are all human beings. All of us who consider Sri Lanka as our motherland, whether we belong to the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim or Burgher communities, become aware of such identity only after we are born and have grown up enough to understand things. One community may be, in number, of little more or less than another. But the more important consideration is that we all are human beings. On that plane we are all equal.

(Speech at the Gam Udawa 91 Exhibition - Kamburupitiya - 23.6.91)

(A multi ethnic democratic society) has always been my vision for Sri Lanka. There is no other way. But for me this is not a new political vision. It has been my vision from the time I entered



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politics. Quite apart from anything else, in purely practical terms, my former electorate in Colombo is multi ethnic. I could not have represented my electorate for the past 35 years if I had not practiced multi ethnic politics. Furthermore, now, as President, my electorate is the whole country. I'm the President for all groups and communities who comprise Sri Lanka. Surely I have to be multi-ethnic ?

If a tendency has arisen in the North and the East to separate from the rest of the country, we must remember that it is the result of attempts to foist certain things on the people living in those areas.

(At the 35th Annual Convention of the U.N.P. - 17.12.89)

The rights of any section of the people should not be reduced because they are in a minority. Rights should be enjoyed by all on the basis of humanity. Whatever race, religion or party one belonged to, one should enjoy the same human rights as others.

(Ibid)

The people must have the right to speak any language, practice any custom, wear any dress, uphold any political philosophy and to support any political party they want or prefer. We must not infringe on any basic right of the people of this nature. If we understand the importance of this policy and follow it we would be able to make this country a much more happy and much better place to live in, than we found it when we assumed power.

(Ibid)



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

"History has failed us. We too have failed history."



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We meet at a critical moment in human history. Today, the forces of creativity and the forces of destruction are locked in a titanic struggle. On the outcome depends the destiny of the human species; on the outcome depends the destiny of our planet. We, the poor, we the underprivileged of the world, are on the frontline. Small shifts in economic resources and military balances, changes that barely touch more affluent societies, mean life or death to nations and peoples; peoples who live at the margins of existence. This is why we must, individually and collectively, bend every effort towards survival.

In a sense, history has failed us. We too have failed history. We are children of great revolutions - the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries and the Socialist Revolution of the 20th century. However, neither industry nor ideology has brought us the peace, the prosperity and the progress that should be the birthright of all citizens of the world. Today, one part of the world has too much materialism, too many machines and too sad an environmental condition. The other part of the world has too much poverty, too many people and too sad a human condition. And both parts have too many weapons.

Ironically, mankind is faced with two pressing problems - how to save half the population from underweight - I mean under nourishment, and the other half from overweight - I mean over eating. Is this the human heritage? Is this the monument which our generation will leave to history? It was, in large measure, to correct this imbalance between power and people that the Non-Aligned Movement was born in Belgrade twenty-five years ago. The lofty hopes of those founding impulses haunt us today. After one-quarter of a century, a period of vigorous activity and striving, the basic issues show little change. The prospect for individuals in developing regions remain bleak. On the larger

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stage of global affairs, a state of static has becalmed our most righteous agitations. Our desperate cries have been reduced to muted whispers.

Conference in Harare, Zimbabwe - 3.9.86)

Civilization, as we know it, dawned more than 10,000 years ago. Since then, mankind has advanced through major thrusts of reform and renewal. In the 19th Century, a new moral order ended the ancient institution of slavery. At the same time, we saw the evolution of the social welfare state. In the mid-20th Century, a new political order ended old style colonialism. Then we saw the evolution of a large number of nation states. A new social order has added human and civil liberties, the rights of women and minorities, to the global agenda. Now a new international economic order and a new information order offer the potential for more equitable distribution of goods and services.

(At the Congress of the International Union of Architects - Brighton, U.K. - 14.7.87)

Both rich and poor must realize that weaponry is not an insurance of security. It is a symbol of insecurity. We may have to use it, but let us not be deceived as to the corrosive effect of force on the human spirit. Let us demand that the pace setters of the arms race respect the human race. Let us call for a diversion of funds from destruction to development. We will and we must make these appeals. But let us remember that unless we apply the strictures to ourselves, they will have only a rhetorical impact.

(8th NAM Conference - Harare, Zimbabwe - 3.9.86)

For twenty-five years, the Non Aligned Movement has drawn attention to the evils of racism. On this, there can be no compro-

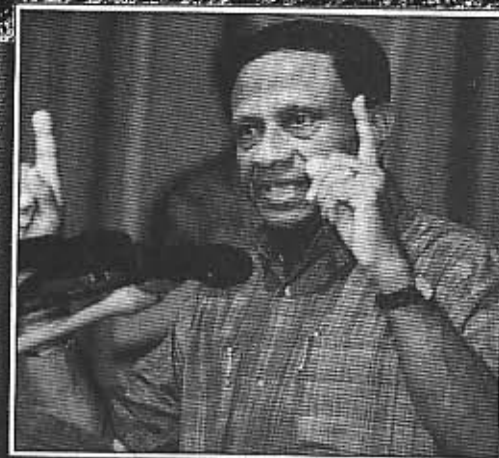


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mise and no retrenchment of principle. Few will accept the concept that colour is a measure of worth. It is an idea that demeans all enlightened philosophies. If our African brethren demand urgent measures to relieve the discrimination that pains them so much, how can we refuse them? We know that they are with us in our struggles and afflictions. We must be with them in theirs.

(Ibid)



NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

"We must refresh the springs of our patriotism with the best of international culture and talent."



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We, as a nation, do not claim to be perfect. We have our failings and our shortcomings. And it is best that we face them squarely.

(Address to the Sri Lankan community in Harare - 6.9.86)

Our nationalism must not be parochial. We must refresh the springs of our patriotism with the best of international culture and talent. Only in that way can we aspire to greatness worthy of our ancient culture.

(1.11.86)

I hope you will train Sri Lankans to be internationalists as well as nationalists.

(6.2.90)

Our lives are supported by many things produced in other countries and also the people of other countries give us generous assistance for our existence and progress. We therefore must not be parochial in our attitudes. We must be large hearted and be generous towards all humanity, realising the unity and brotherhood of all human beings. We have to learn our lessons from other countries.

(40th Anniversary Celebration of the Negombo Municipality - 23.12.89)

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"I have never gone back on a promise given to the people or left the people in the lurch.... The entire nation knows that I will do what I say and honour the promises I give."

(U.N.P. Special Sessions 9.10.88)

