

A letter to the University Children from a Great Grandfather

It is 2.30 AM, and I just got up from my sleep after watching the Cricket match till 10.00 PM and I decided to write this to the children of state medical faculties who are keeping out of their University lectures and clinical for almost a year. I know that all of you are not rich but from middle class families or poor families.

Your parents during the 13 years of schooling provided you with food, clothing and shelter and education taking you by holding your hand and walking to school, at first the nursery and then primary up to the grade 9 and later allowed you to go alone to your tuition classes, for which they paid their hard earned money.

Almost all of you attend tuition classes.

After completing the most competitive examination in your life you were selected to study Medicine and your parents, brothers and sisters were very happy. Finally your close attachment to your parents and family eased. You became independent. You started your studies consciously.

Then a group of people who were interested only in themselves and their greed for money commenced poisoning your minds, making false allegations against SAITM.
I started South Asian institute of Technology and Medicine in 2009 at the request of the then Minister of Higher Education Professor Vishwa Warnapala who lamented that, of 250,000 who sit the GCE advance level examination 100,000 qualified to enter the state universities but only 18,000 admitted due to lack of physical facilities.

Of the students who are left out majority either gave up their studies or entered other professions and courses outside the university system and foreign universities.

He then invited those who had money to invest in higher education. I met Vishwa and agreed to invest my money amounting to Rs. 1,600 million which I got from the funds from the sale of my shares in Asha Central Hospital in Horton Place, Colombo 07 to Mr. Ashok Pathirage of Asiri Hospital.

Next, I informed the University Grants Commission, the Chairman of which was Professor Gamini Samaranayake.

He however replied to my application saying the University Act does not allow for private higher education.

Since I never take 'no' for an answer, I applied to the Board of Investment in Sri Lanka (BOI) the Chairman of which was the leading entrepreneur in the country Mr. Dhammika Perera.
He readily granted the approval and we signed an agreement in which I asked for Health Science, IT Management, etc.
What is Health science? Please refer the Wikipedia in the internet. You will find medicine, dentistry, nursing, allied health sciences and a long list of subjects.

The primary cause of the tension in the country is that the Chairman of the five member committee to look in to the complaints of the government medical association Dr. Ranvindra Ruberu the then Secretary to the Ministry of Health. He alleged that I had not applied for medicine but only for health sciences. Which I as mentioned earlier includes Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and a host of other subjects.
The medical faculty of the South Eastern University is the faculty of Health Science, but grants the MBBS.

Imperial College London which had Technology grants the MBBS degree which is highly valued as the fourth placed medical college in the world.

Please refer to the Wikipedia for all the universities that grant MBBS degree but have faculties of Health Science. You children have been exploited by interested parties like the GMOA and the agents sending students abroad who stand to lose if SAITM is successful and other medical colleges come to Sri Lanka.

I requested the SLMC to monitor SAITM from 2009 but the replies from 2009 up to very recent times was that the minimum prescribed standards have been gazatted but not passed by Parliament and when passed that the SLMC would come to monitor. The minimum prescribed standards were not even passed by Parliament when the SLMC sent the review team to my University under the Universities Act at my request.

Ten members headed by Prof. Rizvi Sheriff were appointed to review SAITM by the SLMC. Nine members including the Chairman came on 13th ,14th and 15th of July 2015 went through the entire SAITM Campus.

They met the Academic staff, the Administrative staff, and the minor staff and the students and handed over the report that the graduates of SAITM be given provisional registration subject to certain conditions which could only be met if the SAITM students were allowed the use of State Hospitals. By a court case, SAITM students have been given the use of the Psychiatry and Forensic Medicine facilities at Avissawella Hospital and Community Medicine in Kaduwela MOH Areas.

I entered the University of Ceylon (the only university in the country) in 1953 with 26 other students from Ananda College Colombo. I passed out with a Second Class MBBS in 1958, did my internship in my home town in Panadura, and commenced a family practice in 1959. Immediately after my internship was over.

Being the youngest of the family doctors at that time, I used to answer almost all the night calls as the seniors did not go out in the night.

I remember the times when early in the morning at 2 or 3 am I was rudely woken up by the banging on the doors and shouting, calling me to come soon, to see a patient who was bleeding after delivery. Promptly I get up, change my night clothes take the emergency bag and get in to the vehicle brought by them or my car to go to see the patient.

Generally, it was a poor village called Thotawatta or Ambalandoowa predominantly Muslims.

The mother was lying in the mat bleeding while several women were seated on the mat round the patient.

When I ask for water to wash my hands they bring a Koraha a clay pot used to sift the sand from rice.

After washing my hands and putting on the gloves I ask for a torch. They bring a kuppi lamp, that is a used electric bulb with the top removed and filled with kerosene oil and fixed with wick.

With this light I either squat or kneel on the mat and after about half an hour or an hour when the stitching was over and bleeding stopped, I get up wash my hands and take my bag to go home, the relation say that they have no money. I tell them it is alright and go home to sleep till next patient wakes me up again.

I always remember with gratitude what the greatest Surgeon of all time, Dr. P. R. Anthonis who operated till he was 92 years told me "Neville, Do not go after money, you will get money when you need it".
In 1972 the Prime Minister Dudley Senanayaka one of the kindest and the best leaders that Sri Lanka had, appointed me as the electoral organizer for Panadura which the UNP had not won for 25 years and the sitting member was the Minister of Transport Leslie Gunawardena leader of Lanka Samasamaja party.

The election was held in 1977 and I was able to turn the Red electoral Green after 25 years. Because all my patients voted for me and gave me 28,000 votes to Leslie's 18,000.

So Dr. Anthonis's prediction was correct. At that election I spent only Rs.25000 which was the cost of Diesel for my jeep.

The period 1972 – 1975 was the happiest years of my political life when every weekend I used to go from village to village organizing party branches.

After the walking we had lunch, generally bread as rice was allowed only on two days of the week by the government. We enjoyed lunch under coconut trees seated on the ground. The village branch supplied all the food generously prepared at the home at the Branch Secretary or the President.

The next time I got money when I needed most was in 2012 when I decided to construct my own hospital for the clinical training of SAITM students who were not allowed to go to the Homagama Hospital for their clinicals by the GMOA who threatened an all Island strike if they were allowed in to the Homagama.

Since I had not made any financial provisions for a hospital I attempted to raise funds from my regular bank, which took a long time to process the loan application.

In desperation I went to the Bank of Ceylon and met the Chairman Dr. Gamini Wickramasinghe who was introduced to me by Prof. Waidyasekera. He is the owner of IIT which has produced thousands of IT Graduates and the then Deputy General Manager Mr. D. M. Gunasekera, now General Manager.

On the Chairman's table was a heap of leaflets requesting the Bank not to give loans to SAITM.

Dr. wickramasinghe asked me for the succession plan and when I showed that my granddaughter Himali Jayatilake a first class graduate in Finance and Management, a passed finalist of the CIMA, he was satisfied and said that the hospital was a national need and that he would fund the hospital.
Ultimately the total cost of Rs. 2,500 million was granted by the bank.

In a short time the hospital became popular and the numbers were increasing when Carlo Fonseka made a statement that Rev. Sobitha Thero died was because of the treatment given at NFTH.

Since I have filed a defamation case against him. I will not say more about this.

However, the hospital admissions dropped drastically. Since the hospital was built for clinical training of SAITM students and not to make money I decided to handover the hospital to government.

Since then the numbers have increased. The Medical and Surgical wards are full and now the students say that they are overworked!

The reason for writing all this is to show the children who are keeping away from lectures and clinical for nearly an year to go back to their universities, study hard and sit for the

examinations on time, become Consultants who are conscientious and not fleecing poor patients like the present GMOA members who "jump from hospital to channel patients" hardly giving the patients the time to talk about his ailment, how they are being used as cats paws for the agents led by Nonis and his partners who are scared that their job of sending students abroad and making millions would be obstructed if more non state Medical Colleges come to Sri Lanka after SAITM is successful.

Therefore as a great-grandfather of 86 years having two beautiful great grandsons, I kindly request you to go back to your studies become consultants and make the country great.

The time now is 5 AM and time to catch up a few minutes of sleep.

by
Dr. Neville Fernando
Founder Chairman
South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine

Do You Know That

- **The Agents Make Between Rs. 500,000 – Rs. 1 Million Per Student They Send Abroad and also Get a Cut From the Foreign Universities?**
- **A Prado Jeep Worth Rs. 50 Million Has Been Given to a Student Leader?**
- **Everytime a Student Leader is Arrested and Remanded is Paid Rs. 1 Million? A Female Student is Paid Rs. 500,000?**
- **The Cost of Organizing the SAITM Virodhi Walk from Kandy to Colombo cost over Rs. 200 Million as the Walkers are Paid Rs. 5000, A Bottle of Arrack or Kasippu, Three Meals of Fried Rice and Chicken and Aerated Water on the way Etc……**
- **3 Wheelers are Paid and Dimo Battas and the Bands Have to Be Paid.**

Why Do They Spend All This Money?
To Keep you out of Universities and close doors to SAITM so that Agents can send Students Abroad and Earn Millions.

The Cost to the Country is Rs.132 Billion A Year.
More Non-State Medical Colleges will Save this Money for the Country which will then be used to **Increase State Facilities.**