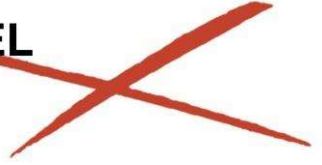


**ROY RATNAVEL**  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER



October 1, 2024.

His Excellency Anura Kumara Dissanayake  
President  
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Dear Mr. President,

Please accept my warmest congratulations on your election victory. As you embark upon your new responsibilities as the ninth Executive President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the challenges facing your high office are daunting. While the citizens of Sri Lanka look ahead to the nation's 77<sup>th</sup> year, it is my hope that you will be guided by its poignant history, uplifted by genuine human ideals, and inspired by the best among its people, including the sympathetic interest of those who were born in Sri Lanka but currently residing outside the country.

Your election victory comes at a time of crucial economic turmoil for the people of Sri Lanka. It has been said, in politics, "Campaigning is poetry and governing is prose." Nevertheless, it is encouraging to observe your aim to restore the trust in governmental institutions and to cater to the needs of all citizens, irrespective of their religion, language or culture, through your genuine initiatives and well-intended projects.

The true greatness of a nation—is its willingness to accord all communities status and dignity equal to the majority, to weld those diverse groups into a harmonious polity. In this joust, a leader with this vision is pivotal. Unless, and until, Sri Lanka can produce leaders who can realize that truth and are willing to act on it—it will continue to be dismembered by conflict well into the future. Many, including me, are hopeful that you can be that leader.

In 1948, when Sri Lanka got its independence, it was considered to be the post-colonial nation most likely to succeed economically and democratically. Unfortunately, since then, Sri Lanka has been governed by leaders with penchant for racial hatred. Through their hatred, they have destroyed the country.

The democratic political system assumes a certain minimum level of ethical behaviour, responsibility and civility on the part of elected government officials that is above what is explicitly spelled out by the constitution. If those ethics are absent—well, democracy just isn't going to work. It is my view that in the absence of an overwhelming and fundamental change in Sri Lankan attitude and behaviour, equality of minorities, religion and gender, peace and prosperity will never be possible in Sri Lanka.

We all need to remember that peace is not just the absence of war, but the active pursuit of a future where justice and reasonable accommodation for equality are the cornerstones of a fair nation, just like Canada where I currently reside. True peace cannot exist in Sri Lanka without justice, where all lives are valued equally, and every citizen is treated with the same respect and compassion.

A fair, stable and prosperous Sri Lanka must be a nation that is relentless in its commitment to reconciliation, addressing current grievances of minorities and past injustices while ensuring that no community thrives at the expense of another. Because true peace is built on the foundation of fairness and dignity for all.

For an extended period, I have asserted that I was an 'accidental' Sri Lankan by birth. Now, I express a measured optimism in my hope that you can serve as a President for all, not by deepening Sri Lanka's past racial divisions, but instead by focusing on strengthening the present bonds between all Sri Lankans. Despite our backgrounds, there is a basic universal truth: we always have more in common than different across all races, religions, and political ideologies.

Today, I stand in solidarity alongside with all those who advocate for dialogue over division, who choose hope and optimism over hatred and who prioritize reconciliation over revenge, and those who prefer peace to violence.

Again, congratulations on your election. Godspeed Mr. President!

Sincerely,

Roy Ratnavel  
Retired Investment Industry Executive  
Bestselling author of Prisoner #1056