

Appreciation
Late Mr. U Karunatillake

Mr. U Karunatillake who had his secondary education at S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa (during the war years) and later at Mt. Lavinia graduated in Chemistry from the University of Ceylon in 1954.

Mr. Karunatillake who joined J L Morrison Son & Jones (Ceylon) Ltd was handed over its manufacturing division (known as MSJ Industries Ceylon Ltd) in the late 1950's. He was instrumental in building the factory building referred to as the "Morrison's Factory". The serious barriers enforced by restricted import controls in the sixties could not prevent Mr. Karunatillake from building up, commencing and maintaining the successful functioning of the factory. He even went to the extent of improvising similar machinery parts purchased from Panchikawatta. "Morrison's Factory" won the praise & confidence of multinational pharmaceutical companies which entrusted the manufacturing of their products to MSJI under licence. Mr. Karunatillake proved his capability and won the confidence of everyone with whom he dealt by establishing very successfully the infrastructure needed for production, packaging, quality control and storage. He extracted the technical knowledge from multinationals and skillfully transformed the products to suit available local resources.

Under Mr. Karunatillake's pioneering capability, Morrison's factory proceeded to manufacture a complete range of pharmaceutical, household and cosmetic products with international brand names such as Andrews Liver Salt, Phillips Milk of Magnesia, Actal, Fergone, Franol, Nutroferol, Panadol, Panopeton, Antepar, Flurovit, Lacto Calamine Lotion, Brylcream, Morning Pride shaving cream and Wisdom Tooth brushes etc. By 1964, Mr. Karunatillake thus applied the Chemistry he learnt at University to develop a very successful range of household products. Special mention must be made of his pioneering invention and development of two main local products – Morrison's Gripe Mixture and Valmelix Cough Syrup – in the product range of J L Morrison Son & Jones (Ceylon) Ltd. Up to date these two remain two major products of the company.

A convinced Socialist in thought, word, deed and action, Mr. Karunatillake was closely associated with Professor Senaka Bibile & Dr. S A Wickramesinghe, as they introduced the Essential Drugs Policy in the early 1970's. Mr. Karunatillake was a very strict adherent of this policy which required the marketing of drugs through their generic names rather than brand names in order to reduce the cost of drugs to the

people. He arranged to manufacture well over 100 generic products (oral liquids, tablets, capsules & external preparations) in the MSJI "Morrison's Factory" on contract & tender basis and also to the private sector at affordable prices without compromising on quality.

It is indeed as a result of the hard works & solid foundation laid by Mr. Karunatillake, that MSJI currently produces well over 100 products at a substantial capacity and in great reliance on growth & service to the people and medical profession in Sri Lanka.

Human Resource Development was always uppermost in Mr. Karunatillake's sphere of action in order to develop Morrison's Factory to the very high level it finds itself today. He recruited capable young graduates, both from local and foreign universities, to key positions in the Factory, guided them & allowed them in the equipped with the necessary experience and confidence by giving them the freedom to perform on their own! The encouragement extended by him for training & improving the educational standards of staff built up a lot of confidence in all MSJI activities: His recruitment policy enabled a number of Science and Chemistry graduates to be engaged in responsible roles in the Factory. A number of employees trained under Mr. Karunatillake in the area of pharmaceuticals have found gainful employment in this field in various institutions in Sri Lanka as well as abroad.

It is this forward looking and unconventional approach that enabled Mr. Karunatillake to make maximum use of the Graduate Chemists produced by the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon even at the inception of the Graduateship Programme in Chemistry. Two able MSJI employees in the technician grade (H A Sisira Kumara & B A Cooray) were encouraged and supported by Mr. Karunatillake to join this unknown, unprecedented and unconventional graduate level programme of the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon at its very inception in 1979. The employees were also given financial support by MSJI to continue with the programme through the efforts of Mr. Karunatillake. The very fact that those two employees were able to secure executive positions (after they became Institute of Chemistry Graduate Chemists in 1984/85) and play a leading role in the further development of MSJI over the next two decades is convincing proof of Mr. Karunatillake's foresight at a time when no one was quite sure where the programme was heading to and what the quality of the products would

be. While Mr. Cooray continues in the Company as its Assistant General Manager (Factory), Mr. Sisira Kumara emigrated in the late nineties and is today conducting high level cancer research at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

Mr. Karunatillake remained as one of the very few Chemists from the private sector who actively involved themselves activities of the Institute of Chemistry. He was an active supporter particularly of its educational programmes until his demise. He served as a member of the Educational Committee and the Academic Board of the Institute's College of Chemical Sciences from its inception in 1981 for an unbroken continuous period of 26 years until his death. He thus made important contributions to the Institute in thought, word and deed. He obtained MSJI support for the Institute's educational & other activities wherever such support was solicited or deemed to be necessary for various purposes and objectives.

Mr. Karunatillake was invited to take over the Vice-Presidency and thereafter the Presidency of the Institute (he would have been the first person from

the Private Sector to do so!) on several occasions but he declined this due to other commitments. The sudden death of Mrs. Karunatillake a few years ago had a profound effect on him and I believe he withdrew from many activities as a result; however he continued to attend meetings of our Academic Board very regularly. We also invited him to become an Honorary Fellow of the Institute two years ago.

Mr. Karunatillake had a charming and pleasant personality and was not abrasive in whatever he said or did. As Chairman of the Academic Board of the College of Chemical Sciences, its Honorary Dean and a Past President of the Institute I wish to associate myself with the Institute as we mourn the demise of a fellow Chemist, a loyal supporter and a friend of the Institute. I wish to quote Holy Scripture and say

“Well done! Thou good and faithful servant”
May he rest in peace.

Professor J N O Fernando

LIONCHEM (PVT) LTD
"The Pulse of Testing"

Industrial Raw Materials & Machinery
(Food, Rubber, Plastic, Paint, Ceramic, Textile & Leather)

**Waste Water Treatment Chemicals
Equipments & Services**

**Research, Analytical & Industrial
Quality Control Equipments**

**General Laboratory Equipments,
Glassware & Chemicals**

No : 156, Main Street, Battaramulla.
Tel : 4403038
Fax : 5510007
E-mail : lionchem@sltnet.lk

SRL PLSRW ELCO sd fine - CHEM LIMITED