

# **An analysis of Visionary Leadership in Sri Lankan University Education through Modern Leadership Theories: A case study of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero**

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## **Abstract**

Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, the founding father of the Vidyodaya University<sup>7</sup>; known as University of Sri Jayewardenepura today contributed to the success of the Sri Lankan education system and language and culture of Sri Lanka. He took leadership to create many changes in the educational system in Sri Lanka especially in terms of Higher Education. Through his leadership, he was able to cater to the majority of the Nation and to preserve the identity of the country and its people. It is mentioned in the Mahavansa that the Vidyodaya University under the guidance of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero provided students with the facilities of learning subject areas such as “Business Administration”, and “Public Administration” at the University. These introductions to a former Pirivena were seen in the negative light in 1960. However, it has benefited many generations and is still in use in the University. Similarly in creating a University out of a Pirivena in 1959 he was able to continue the work of Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero providing the Sinhalese an opportunity to gain a recognized education. He opened the doors not only to the Sinhalese but also to the Tamils and the Muslims by later introducing the Tamil Language. His foresight of identifying needs and the ability to adapt and create an environment that will facilitate such needs was one of his most significant features of his leadership. This case study was conducted for the purpose of analyzing Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero’s leadership in a more theoretical perspective. The paper will analyze his visionary leadership through the services he has rendered for the development of education. His services to the Sri Lankan education system will be analyzed through content analysis. His visionary thinking has been praised but a case study basing his leadership qualities on modern leadership theories has not been conducted. This paper uses the method of descriptive research to analyses Rev. Welivitiye Thero’s visionary leadership through modern leadership theories and the traits within him that enable him to lead the way to make new and necessary changes. While many historically important individuals are celebrated and commemorated it is seldom that studies are conducted to discuss their services and what prompted their effective leadership, this is mainly because many believe that the methodologies used are outdated. However this paper discusses modern leadership theories that are considered suitable leadership methods for modern organizations in relation to the methods used by Rev. Welivitiye Sri

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<sup>7</sup>The roots of Vidyodaya University can be traced back to the Vidyodaya Pirivena of Maligakanda established by Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero in 1873

Soratha Thero. Thereby the paper creates a discourse for leaders and aspiring leaders in Higher education to follow and improve.

**Key words:** Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, University Leaders

## **Introduction**

The most venerable Welivitiye Soratha Thero was Chandradasa Kumarasiri Jayewardene by birth. He was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1897 in Galle. Chandradasa became a Bikku under the name of Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1912. It is a known fact that Ven. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero had a keen intellect; he was able to study all 423 Gatha of the Dhammapadaya in a matter of days. He also was able to become the Island first facing the “Praccheena Prarambha” exam.

In 1917, Soratha samanera received his higher ordination from the Malwatu Chapter, Kandy and entered the Vidyodaya Pirivena. He was then able to receive the “Swarna Mudrika” award for the “Pracheena Panditha” Exam. Thus, having performed excellently he joined the staff of the pirivena in 1932. He was then selected for a scholarship to continue his higher studies in Kolkata.

Having completed his education and returning back to his motherland, he was nominated as the main author of the translating panel of the Pali-Sinhala Thripitaka for the 2500 Buddha Jayanthi, to which he contributed for many years. In 1936 March he was made the “Deputy Chief Preceptor” of the Vidyodaya Pirivena.

The term leadership is often perceived under various connotations, Susan R. Komives and John P. Dugan in their article *‘Contemporary Leadership Theories’* states that “for some, this represents an internalized identity, shared process, or civic engagement grounded in experiences as social activities with development mentors, or from positive group experiences. For others, the term may elicit a more negative interpretation associated with abuses of power, positionality, or an interpersonal focus on end goals” (Dugan & Komives, 2010: 11).

Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘leadership’ as the action of leading a group of people or an organization (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010) (Placeholder1). Though the definitions of leadership tend to vary in different fields the premise still refers to the basic definition proposed by the Oxford English Dictionary. Dr. Henerath H.D.N.P. Opatha during an informal interview

on the subject matter provided a more acronymically justified definition for leadership in terms of Organizational Behavior through a traits analysis.

He states that the letter 'L' stands for 'liberal' which may indicate that a leader is both general and not politically inclined; 'E' as 'efficient and effective' thus a leader is able to achieve set goals with efficient and effective use of resources; 'A' as 'active and assertive', a leader will be physically active and would take action, s/he will also be forthright; 'D' as 'dependable', a leader is trustworthy, there is consistency between his behavior and ideals; 'E' as 'educated' a leader would have an above average education; 'R' as 'responsible', a leader will take decisions and will be responsible for its outcome, he will not betray his subordinates; 'S' as 'sensitivity' leadership is not complete without subordinates, therefore a leader must be sensitive to the needs of his people; 'H' as 'honesty', a leader will not indulge in falsehood, he will fulfill promises and will be consistent in his preaching and behavior; 'I' as 'Initiative and Intelligence', He will not hesitate to begin what is needed, he will possess both cognitive intelligence which will aid him in rational thinking and emotional intelligence which will help him control his emotions while understanding others; 'P' as 'patience', 'persistence' and 'power' (Opatha, 2018).

The above explanation brings together a more holistic explanation of leadership. The above mentioned characteristics are part and parcel of any theory of Leadership. These characteristics will be seen in Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero's character through his many contributions to language and education. In our analysis of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, we will be looking at a few modern leadership theories such as Charismatic leadership, Transformational leadership, Moral leadership, and Strategic leadership.

Before plunging into the discussion of modern leadership it is apt to discuss why they were chosen in order to examine Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero's leadership. In the early 20th Century leadership theories such as the 'Great man Theory' and "Trait theory" were more focused on the leader and his role; the models often linked the leader with the extraordinary. However the theories of leadership and the models of leadership dramatically changed with the publishing of '*Leadership*' by Macgregor Burns. His publication highlighted the relationship between the leader and the followers (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Thus in order to examine the true extent of a leader's role the paper will examine a few modern leadership theories.

Charisma is a natural personal characteristic, it refers to the ability to attract and inspire subordinates, and it is a form of interpersonal attraction. A charismatic leader would have high self-confidence, a clear vision and extraordinary behavior. S/He would use leadership styles of envisioning a desired future, energizing his/her subordinates to act towards gaining such a future and enabling subordinates to face challenges (Opatha H. , 2015).

It is mentioned in '*Charismatic leadership and organizational outcomes: The mediating role of employees' work-group identification*' by Lavinia Cicero and Antonio Pierro "Charismatic leaders are able to formulate and articulate inspirational vision and behaviours that foster an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary" (Cicero & Pierro, 2007)

Transformational leaders are agents of positive change. This form of leadership empowers and inspires followers to achieve a collective goal. Positive change is a factor that drives a transformational leader; s/he sees the need to change an existing organizational framework by generating a higher organizational effectiveness.(Opatha H. , 2015) S/He would introduce innovative ideas and concepts that will be beneficial for the future. A transformational leader would possess charisma but his/her characteristics will not depend solely on it. (Johnson, 2007)

A transactional leader is a person who would opt for stability. Stability is essential continue day-to-day functions smoothly. Stability according to Opatha (2015) is related to 'routine work related transactions'. It is a quintessential fact that would encourage followers to do routine but necessary tasks successfully so as to hold an organization together (Opatha H, 2015).

Moral leadership concerns itself with the right and wrong of a transaction. S/He would consider the realities of greed, competition, productivity, etc., yet s/he would strive to do what he believes is the rightful action. (Daft, 2008)

Strategic leadership considers the complexities of both the organization and the environment. Its role is more akin to the top level of management therefore; their relationship with the said environment is superior for the purpose of gaining a sustainable and competitive advantage from the environment (Moorhead & Griffin, 2009).

Proper leadership within institutions of higher educations is one of the key components that aid the success of the said institution. There have been several researches conducted on this regard

such as *Leadership in Educational Administration: Concepts, Theories and Perspectives* by Saeid Farahbakhsh, *Analysis of Head of Departments Leadership Styles: Implication for Improving Research University Management Practices* by Zaidatol Akmaliah, LopePihie, AmirSadeghi and HabibahElias, *Competencies for effective leadership in higher education* by Marion Spendlove.

Similarly there have also been several case studies that look at various leaders through theories of leadership, for the purpose of this study the authors have considered the following research papers: *Leadership change: A case study analysis of strategy and control systems development* by Alaudin Ahmadasiri, Zarifah Abdullah, and Marhaiza Ibrahim, *Toward post heroic leadership: A case study of Gezi's collaborating multiple leaders* by Hande Eslen-Ziya and Itr Erhart *Creating Effective Leaders Through Situational Leadership Approach* by M.A.W.I. Easther and *Advising Jay: A Case Study Using a Situational Leadership Approach* by Alan C. Lerstrom and Luther College. These studies have been examined as to understand various leadership styles and methods of analysis.

These papers look at the effective styles of leadership that help in achieving goals. Similarly this paper analyses the leadership styles used by one of the most popular leaders in the history of Higher Education: Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero.

## **Methodology**

Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero was an iconic leader at the time. He took the challenge of providing a higher education institution to an independent Sri Lanka when the only other institution of Higher education in the country was reluctant to offer Sinhala medium instruction. While he has taken a leadership position to provide many services to the country, his contribution to higher education is significant and its results are visible even today. Thus it is evident that he has made a lasting impact through his leadership, through this paper the personal characteristics, and what fueled his ideology will be analyzed.

The country saw the demise of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero in 1963. Thus the case study is built upon the literature written by personnel who have associated Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Theo and historical literature of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. This descriptive research analyses the content of books such as the *Sri Soratha Sahithyaya* by Hikkaduwe Revatha and Hikkaduwe Uditha, *Vidudaya Sambawana*, a compilation by Sunil Ariyaratne, *Sri*

*Jayewardenepura Vishwavidyala Wruthantha* by Sunil Ariyaratne, the *Socio-cultural background to the evaluation of Vidyalandara and Vidyodaya Universities* by Ananda Guruge and *Welivitiye Sri Soratha Prathyawalokanaya etc.* While the authors are aware that these literature adopts a persuasive writing style apt for commemoration this study uses the facts and some of the sentiments expressed to analyze his method of leadership through the distinct actions taken for the development of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. The authors have applied several modern theories of leadership so as to analyze Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero's leadership role in terms of his services for the development of higher education in the country, thereby creating a discourse of leadership styles that is apt for leaders in the field of education in the country to use and apply.

The paper speaks of a host of leadership theories which has been studied from various titles. The authors have also taken measures to interview one of the leading specialists in subject of Human Recourses, Prof. H. Opatha about leadership and organizational behavior. Rev. Prof. Vijithadhamma too was interviewed regarding a language theories and how certain language elements are symbolic of personality.

### **Analysis**

Many of the modern leadership styles fall in place with the tactics taken by Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, it was identified that many of these theories have overlapping characteristics. Therefore, after careful analysis the paper has selected Transformational and Transactional leadership as theories that capture the extent of his leadership as his goal was to create positive change through stability. It is interesting to note that though many theorists have carefully segregated these two theories of leadership, they both collide in union at certain sentiments. The two features that are dominantly discussed in this paper: 'Positive change' and 'stability' are found in both theories in unison, yet the paper has attempted to provide the theories certain individuality prior to its collision that can be seen as the paper proceeds.

These elements were the foundation of the services rendered by Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero. Furthermore these elements are what modern leadership in Higher Education should be based on. While curricular and knowledge evolves with time, it is necessary to create a lasting change that will be able grasp these changes so as to better prepare its chief stakeholders: students to serve the nation and the world.

It is the foresight and the visionary thinking of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero that led this paper to identify features of Transformational and Transactional leadership within him. He was foresighted in his decisions and the result was a long lasting contribution to language and education.

It is also important to note that while Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero had many admirable characteristics and has done many renowned deeds, this paper will look at only his contribution to the higher education of Sri Lanka which also aided in revitalizing the country's mother tongue. A leader processes certain traits or characteristics within his personality to drive him towards a set goal. Leadership is the pinnacle of Human Resources. The Leader is constantly required to manage his chief resource Humans so as to ensure that his goals and targets are reached effectively and efficiently. While the authors acknowledge that these characteristics could be analyzed through trait theory, this study employs language theory as language was one of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero's skills and the basis of his services to education.

Thus having established the leadership traits that the case study would utilize it is apt to discuss about the two theories as they will be the essence of this case study.

Transformational leadership as defined by Opatha is the "Ability to recognize the need for positive change, to create a vision to guide that change, and to execute the change effectively" (Opatha H. , 2015). It is his view that that a transformational leader will inspire his followers to achieve progress and would expect go beyond expectations. A Transactional leader has the "ability to focus on clarifying duties, roles and responsibilities to subordinates and providing them with rewards and punishment contingent on job performance" (Opatha H. , 2015). The main focus of a Transaction leader is the stability; he would set targets and promote followers to reach the set targets. (Opatha H. , 2015).

A transformative leader through his leadership inspires his followers to become their better selves. Their aim is to create a positive change (Johnson, 2007). According to the characterization of Transformational leadership by Bass et al; the first point of characterization 'Idealized influence' discusses how "Transformational leaders become role models for followers who admire, respect and trust them. They put followers needs above their own and their behavior is consistent with the values and principles of the group" (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Bernson, 2003). Transactional leaders

while motivating the followers to reach the end goal of the institution plays little attention to the goals of the follower (Opatha H. , 2015).

Thus though Transactional leadership concerns itself with stability it neglects the development of a follower, who will succeed the leader after he steps down from the leadership position. Developing the follower while continuously working to reach the set goal or surpass the goal will in turn make the follower an effective candidate to take the place of the leader so that the institution can continue its path to success.

According to Opatha's description the culture these two would create is either an adaptive and flexible environment or a rigid and bureaucratic environment. Each environment has its merits but its effect could be made more effective by utilizing selective features if both theories of leadership to establish both positive change and stability.

This concept is taken into consideration by Bernard Bass. He questions Burns' belief that most leaders portray either transactional or transformational characteristics. He therefore further developed Burns' Transformational theory as Transforming theory suggesting that it consists of both characteristics of transformational leadership and active elements of the transactional leadership such as the contingent reward and management by exception(Johnson, 2007).

In the following sections of the paper it will be made evident that Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha incorporated the best features of Transformational theory and Transactional leadership in creating in creating a sustainable educational system and providing a lasting development to the then deteriorating Sinhala language.

The paper has so far discussed the premise of the theories, the proceeding paragraphs will portray the services rendered by Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero and his leadership in creating a positive change by said services that aided to uplift the education in Sri Lanka, the following section 'Discussion' will look at these services through the theoretical lenses.

As a leader in charge of the wellbeing of students, he had a very open mindset. The present statue of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero that greets those who enter the University was built in a manner that would highlight this feature in him. Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero is portrayed



reading a book with his legs crossed and without a 'Muthu Kudaya' over his head. This stands to symbolize his revolutionary thinking and open-mindedness.

Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero endorsed the argumentative nature within students. As mentioned in the university anthem of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura "Ayuthiyedi Viwadeshili Asathyayedhi Vicharashilee" (Argumentative ant moments of injustice and critical at moments untruth). He endorsed radicalism in students, however he stated "Students should be radical, but they should also work with intelligence" (Wanarathana, 2013).

Rev, Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero during his time proved to be more than an intelligent scholar. His admirable organizational skills and dedication helped him build a university that was large enough to provide for the ever multiplying students. He had a keen sense of practicality. He avoided spending on carvings and instead focused on using the expense saved on creating a practical environment for the students (Wanarathana, 2013).

Vidyodaya Pirivena which became Vidyodaya University in 1959 it had three faculties; Arts (Economics, Geography, History, mathematics), Buddhism (Buddhism, Indian Philosophy, Western Philosophy) Languages (Eastern Languages, Pali, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Western Languages). Later however a few more departments were added to the Faculty of Arts such as Archeology, Education, Astrology and Ayurveda. Psychology was added to the Faculty of Buddhism. In 1960 The Faculty of Applied Sciences was created with departments of Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics. In the same year Business and Public Administration was introduced to the Department of Economics. (Wijetunga, 1984)

He was the guiding hand behind providing higher education for women. As a solution for the increasing demand for education for women he managed to gain approval to provide lectures to female students in an institution parallel to Anula Vidyalaya without a special fee. He was also able to lead the way to the creation of External degrees that allowed individuals to gain an education regardless of gender barriers (Wanarathana, 2013)

In establishing Vidyodaya University, he was catering to the need of many Sinhalese students who have received preliminary education in Sinhala. This was a vacuum created by the Government of S.W.R.D. Bandaranayke who brought forth a reform in claim of revitalizing the Sinhala Language. However, though Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero facilitated towards this need he also provided

instruction in Tamil medium so as to cater not only to the Sinhalese but for the Tamils and Muslims as well. He made English a compulsory subject which every student must pass so as to be on par with educated individuals of the world.

Not all of these changes were welcomed, many believed that subjects like Business and Public Administration was not suitable for the Pirivena culture, yet, Ven. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero identified that the Pirivena culture was saturating and was on a mission to create a positive change to cater to the national need. His goal was to serve the nation and the pressing needs of the nation at a time when the country was lagging behind after many years of colonial rule.

The changes he brought were revolutionary, he was not just catering for the present, he was also catering for the future as well. The Departments of Public Administration and Business Administration grew to be a Faculty that is considered as the best Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce in the country.

To become a Transformational leader, to be the agent of positive change and stability he would need certain tools that would assist him in guiding his subordinates through the decisions he made. Rev. Welivitiye Thero was able to identify a person's talents and had an inbuilt sense of making use of the talents he saw in individuals for the reaching of the ultimate goal as well as to improve the person.

Developing a University is a difficult task that requires immense assistance. His character enabled people to reach out to him. It is mentioned in one of the articles that he possessed the ability to gain the service of others by effortlessly reaching out to them. The event of converting the Vidyodaya Pirivena to Vidyodaya University was not a single handed effort. It was the effort of individuals such as Dr. Ananda Guruge, Mr. D.J. Kumarage and Prof. Senerath Paranavithana, yet they were just scattered talents that came under one common goal under the leadership of Rev. Welivitiye Soratha Thero.

Being the hand behind the infamous the *Sri Sumangala Shabdakosaya*, and the translation of the *Thripitaka* to Sinhala it is evident that Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero had a firm grasp of language. In order develop the Nation's mother tongue that was given a secondary position during the colonial era, he with the support of the government took on responsibility of creating the dictionary so that the language can be preserved for the future generations.

Martin Wickramasinghe in his article on Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, *Soratha Nahimiyange Aaswada Wngnanaya* in *Sri Soratha Sahithyayaby* Rev. Hikkaduwe Revatha and Rev. Hikkaduwe Uditha states that that Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero has a gained a firm knowledge of language through his learning and critical analysis of ‘shila lekana’, he states that this can be clearly seen in his *Sumangala Dictionary* and other translations. He stated that he had an admirable sense of how to use components of language in his work (Wickramasinghe, 1964).

He was versatile in a many languages that include: Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit and English. Thereby it is apt that his character is viewed through the very elements of language, Nirukthi and Wyakarana. Nirukthi or Etymology looks deep into the formation of the word. A personification of this component will imply that a person who has the capability of understanding people and identifying their capacity and delegating tasks that were most appropriate for them (Vijithadhamma).

It is mentioned in the section: *Venerable Welivitiye Soratha: An Inspiring Scholar Monk with a flair for action* in *Welivitiye Sri Soratha nahimi Prathyawalokanaya* that Ven. Welivitiye Soratha Thero was able to assume that the author had the capacity to translate the Sri Sumangala Dictionary to English. (Sthivira, Sumana, Palihapitiya, & Kumarapeeli, 2013) This implies that having understood the capacity of how his Dictionary can aid the society he reached out to the author who according to the article was introduced by a mutual friend. The author states that this request was made while he visited Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero at the hospital a few days prior to his demise.

The Wyakarana or Grammar component of languages brings together individual words to make meaningful sentences. Rev.Prof. Medagampitiye Vijithadhamma Thero believes that only person who has both of these personified components of language as qualities can properly govern a set of individuals in such a manner that they would be motivated to achieve the set goal. (Vijithadhamma)

Thus these two features of language were two personified traits that were ever present within Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero. They formed a sense of balance and aided him in his leadership towards creating a stable and positive change.

As mentioned earlier his service in creating Vidyodaya University was a combined effort of some of the greatest minds in the country at the time. Yet these minds alone could not have heaved such

a task, their true potential was realized through the leadership given by Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero.

### **Discussion**

Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero is considered a leader who identified the needs of the time and acted accordingly to fulfill the needs of the nation. The Vidyodaya Pirivena established by Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero in 1863 revitalized the dying culture of Pirivena education. The Vidyodaya Pirivena flourished for many years and Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero was appointed the Deputy Chief Preceptor in 1936. However due to the failing health of the Chief Preceptor Baddegama Piyarathna Thero, he was entrusted with many duties of the Chief Preceptor. Upon the death of Rev. Baddegama Piyarathna Thero in 1958, Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero was entrusted with a responsibility that was the need of the nation.

This refers to the establishment and the conversion of the Vidyodaya Pirivena to Vidyodaya University. The Pirivena Culture of the country can be dated back to 24 centuries, yet this long established and developed tradition was slowly dismantled during colonization and revived as mentioned by Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero. During the years that followed 'The University of Sri Lanka' was home for those who sought higher education within the country. The medium of instruction was English. However, in 1945 the preliminary education was made Sinhala and in 1956 the National Language was declared to be Sinhala. Thus gaining education from the 'The University of Sri Lanka' was limited to a fair few. Therefore, the need of the Nation at the time was to create an education institution where higher education in Sinhala was possible. It was this need that Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero catered for. (Aandagama, 2015)

Thus, it is evident that Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero saw the need of creating a positive change that will facilitate many students at the time, this falls in line with the characteristics of a Transformational leadership

Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero according to many character portrayals showed a keen understanding of the intricate needs for a properly functioning Institute of Higher education. His aim was not just to create an environment that befits the present needs but to also create an environment that will cater to the needs of the generations yet to come. His methods and initiations were highly criticized yet he put the needs of the nation before his.

He displays a feature of transactional leadership by making the education of English by undergraduates compulsory. Here he wished to provide the students and the institution with a stable future in a world where he knew English is the language of opportunity. He further went on to provide instruction by Tamil medium within the University thus enabling Muslim and Tamil students of the nation to gain higher education (Ariyaratne, 2009). These aspects ensure that the students of the University were exposed to tools that will aid them to be effective citizens and leaders who will help develop the nation.

In the Speech made by Professor Malini Aandagama, Former Head of the Department of History and Archaeology of University of Sri Jayewardenepura and the Secretary of the Mahavansa Editorial Board of the Department of Cultural Studies on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2015 for the Commemoration of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero it was mentioned that Rev. Welivitiye Soratha Thero in proposing the introduction of a series of subjects (Public Administration, Business Administration, Modern Science) that were deemed unsuitable at the time has expressed his views on the type of graduate he wishes to create.

“It is our mission to present the society with intellectual and not merely to breed graduates. If one endeavors to transform this sacred abode to a place where degrees are sold, or to a place in which student are given degrees in a mere mechanical fashion that will only lead the University as well as the country to be dragged in disgrace. If our graduates are not proven with the expected intellectualism that their degree claims them to possess, people will indubitably arrive at the conclusion that our University is a ‘store’ where degrees are ‘sold’. Thus everybody affiliated to the University should keep in mind not to engage in any act that will undermine the quality of our degree and the research work” (Aandagama, 2015).

Thus he displays a clear vision of the goal. Johnson in his chapter ‘*Normative Leadership Theories*’ in his book ‘*Meeting the Ethical Challenges: Casting Light or Shadow*’ says that transformational leaders “Use persuasive appeal based reason” in their leadership

His initiatives were not limited only to the education. A university is not merely what is taught and learnt, though they are the fabric of it. For the education to take place a structure should be built

an excellent foundation should be laid so as to ensure that infrastructure and administration will aid rather than obstruct the process of education.

This could be seen clearly with reference to the construction of the initial buildings of the university. The structure of the university was built with precision, having travelled to India to gain an understanding about University structures. After careful examination Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero was able to create an auditorium 12,000 square feet in time for the very first convocation, this hall is used even today by the students of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (Ariyaratne, 2009).

During the building of the Vidyodaya University in Maligakanda, Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero had very limited resources. Dr. Praneeth Abeysundera, Senior Lecturer of The Department of Sociology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura in his commemoration speech given at the 55<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero stated that he did not waste a single grain of sand, a single brick or even a little cement. He stated that he utilized the land in a practical method devoid of any sort of wastage. (Abeysundara, 2018).

Rev. Welivitiye Soratha Thero is known for his massive contribution for the Sinhala Language and the country's higher education. Any leadership role involves working with a group of people who will be the primary resource to accomplish a task. Proper management of people and resources enable one to accomplish the task and reach the ultimate goal in an efficient manner.

He can be considered as one of the most inclusive leaders in Sri Lanka. Having gained the majority of his education from the Buddhist doctrine, he did not hesitate to learn the values explained in others. He urged his followers to take heed in educating themselves in a similar manner.

A significant feature in his religious teachings is the presentation of facts to benefit the current society; yet he never distorted Buddhist teachings. Sri Soratha Thero has highlighted the importance of learning religion with a shrewd and balanced judgment while being on par with the teachings of other religions. In a document written for the 1947 Gunasena Vesak Programme he has mentioned that: "wise Buddhist priests should enhance their knowledge and religious perspective by perusing documents of other religions such as the Holy Bible and the Koran". (Aandagama, 2015)

Leaders, according to Opatha in his book *Organizational Behavior* are a group of people essential for stability and positive change (Opatha H. , 2015). It is his view that a leader should be able to motivate his followers to obtain his goal.

Thereby, it is necessary to identify Ven. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero's goal behind his dedication. Rev. Welivitiye Soratha Thero like Rev. Hikkaduwe Sumangala Thero both began their journey of Service to the country at a time when Sinhala as a language was fast depleting. It was Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero's view that:

The language of a community is an indicator of the development of that community. In the present world there are many developments; developments did not come through the community known as Sinhalese. Therefore these developments cannot enrich the Sinhala Language. It was his belief that if Sinhalese are to move with the pace of the world, it is necessary to coin words to befit these developments of the world so that the Sinhalese too will have a language that will help them understand the wonders of these developments. (Translated, Sri Soratha Sambawana 2013).

His intention was to provide a nation which was falling behind a chance to reach its true potential. This was made impossible at the time because there weren't higher education institutes at that provided students education in the county's national language which has become the language of instruction in Schools due to the Swabasha act of 1956. Identifying this national need he took initiative to create a positive change and thereby develop a group of people who were worldly enough to tackle the changing world.

## **Conclusion**

Transformational Leadership is the "Ability to recognize the need for positive Change, to create a vision to guide that change and execute the change effectively." (Opatha H. , 2015). Opatha also states that the leadership of this sort of personality will encourage the followers to do exceptional things to achieve the goal. Transactional leadership as Opatha defines is the 'Leadership that is needed for stability' (Opatha H. , 2015). According to Burns in his seminal text, *Leadership*: "Such

leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and mortality,” (Burns, 1978). Many of the Modern Leadership theories share similar characteristics and bring the role of the follower into the discussion. In the case of Transformational Leadership and Transactional leadership there is an overwhelming desire within the leaders to guide the followers towards the goal. The difference between the two theories lies in the intentions within them.

A Transformational Leader will concern himself with positive change (Opatha H. , 2015). He will inspire the follower to work towards this goal while encouraging them to surpass the goal. A Transactional leader too will encourage the followers to reach a goal. This may not necessarily be towards a positive change but he will set target and encourage the follower to reach the set target. The methods used would be methodical and rigid, but with the positive factor that the path towards the target will properly plotted and thereby easy to follow.

Higher education is necessarily the task of educating, motivating and moulding an influx of young adults to be responsible individuals who will be future leaders. However it is also an institution that functions under a National agenda using the funds provided by the government. It hosts many students, educators and other individuals. It is a multitude of systems that must work as cogs of clockwork to function smoothly. Thus the incorporation of both methods of leadership is suitable in this endeavor.

It could be clearly seen in many instances of his character portrayals. Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero was able to motivate people such as Ananda Guruge into achieving the immense task of bringing a Pirivena to the status of a University. He was catering to a present need but in his desire for longstanding stability he was also able to see the need of students gaining a basic knowledge of English and creating avenues to teach modern subjects. The motivation or creating positive change can be clearly seen through the following translated passage taken from *Sri Soratha Sambawana*

We once discussed which tradition should be used in forming the Vidyodaya University. We wanted to create a university that will aid the development of the Sinhala-Buddhist culture<sup>8</sup> and will facilitate the country’s needs. Though there were some who had no

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<sup>8</sup>Rev. Welivitiye Sri SorathaThero embarked on a journey to uphold the Sinhala culture because it was a time when Sinhala and



analytical knowledge and those who wished to get their degrees in an easier manner said nonsensical statements about it, those who had a working knowledge of the world were aware that it was difficult to gain a higher education befitting the modern times without the knowledge of English. Therefore we took measures to teach English to everyone who was studying in the University from the time of its inception. We did not object to create new methods in our university that were not found in Universities in other parts of the world, nor were we obliged to include all methods found in those Universities here” (Translated, Sri Soratha Sambawana, 2013).

Thereby, it is evident both by analysis and the results of his efforts that is enjoyed by many today, that Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero took initiative to create a positive change and laid a stable system that lead to the further and continued development of education and language of the country. His leadership resulted in the development of an entire nation.

In close examination of his character it is visible that although Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero uses features of both Transformational and Transactional leadership, his method of leadership is more akin to Transformational leadership. This is enabled through his inbuilt personified traits of language; Nirukthi and Wyakarana. However, this is not to say that there are no features of Transactional leadership in his method of leading. He incorporated the main and most dominant feature of Transactional leadership as he laid down a stable system that was able fully function after his demise but this too was influenced by Transformational Leadership. By the time of his demise in 1964 he has motivated and trained Dr. Ananda Guruge and Mr. Kumarage by example to continue the work of developing the university and thereby education in the country.

The University of Sri Jayewardenepura, the ultimate output of the Leadership of Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, today is the largest university in terms of student population. Keeping true to the legacy of its founding father the University has expanded its knowledge base by creating new faculties such as the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Technology, and Faculty of Engineering. The

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the Sinhala culture were being downtrodden in a society which was holding on to the remnants of a colonial past. He was also catering to the need created by the Swabasha act of 1956 which generated students who were intelligent but was not given the tools to handle the available higher education avenues at the time. While he took leadership to cater to these students, he also made sure that the students were given the chance to learn English by making it a compulsory course. He also was insistent on including Tamil medium which aided both Tamil and Muslim students (Mukarji, 1964)

expansion has resulted in providing the country with youth who is armed with the most updated knowledge so as to serve the country.

Though historically celebrated individuals such as Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero is often appreciated and remembered, their leadership, their characters are seldom looked analytically. Many of these individuals begin from humble backgrounds no different to more than 90% of the population of the world. Yet through their lives they make decisions to lead, to make a change. Identifying the reasons behind their shift of personality and how they managed to achieve great feats aids the development of the future. Thus through this study aspiring leaders no longer need to reinvent the wheel but follow in the footsteps of those who have achieved a great deal. Though their success may have been decades before, as this study clearly portrays their methods benefit even the most modern of theories and therefore modern times.

The Transformational and Transactional theories are widely perceived as ‘ideal’ leadership methods for modern leadership. Yet Rev. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero used a combination of these theories when he took up the challenge of creating a positive Change in the Higher Education of Sri Lanka.

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