



---

## **VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: THE CASE OF VEN. WELIVITIYE SRI SORATHA THERO**

Udugahapattuwa S.V.W. and Amaratunge S.\*

University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

amaratunge@sjp.ac.lk

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Ven. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, the founding father of the Vidyodaya University which is known today as the University of Sri Jayewardenepura was a phenomenal leader. His contribution to the revival of Sinhala language, culture and development of university education has been recorded in many books including the Mahawamsa. He was also the hand behind gaining the University status to Vidyodaya Pirivena in 1959, thus enabling it to provide more benefits for the Sinhalese. He opened the doors not only to the Sinhalese but also to the Tamils and the Muslims by later introducing the Tamil Language. He was a person with great foresight who took leadership in introducing subjects such as: “Modern Science”, “Business Administration”, and “Public Administration” in 1960, an action that was deemed unsuitable for a Pirivena. His foresight of identifying needs and the ability to adapt and create an environment that will facilitate such needs is one of his most admirable features. He was an individual who created a longstanding positive change through leadership. While his leadership is admired through various forms of literature a case study based on his leadership qualities on modern leadership theories has not yet been published. The case study uses theories of two disciplines; Human Resource Management and Language. The paper analyses both the approach taken by the leader and the innate traits that make the approaches possible. The paper uses the theories of Transformational and Transactional leadership to analyze his leadership approaches. The theory of transformational leadership discusses how the method of leadership revolves around the idea of positive change and transactional leadership revolves around the need of stability. It further analyses the traits within Ven. Welivitiye Thero that made such approaches possible through personification of two elements in the theory of language: Nirukthi (Etymology) and Wyakarana (Grammar). Through these theories the paper looks at the leadership that Ven. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero takes in making certain changes that helped develop the Sri Lankan University education. The paper will use published literature about Ven. Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero and informal interviews to gather data for the case study.

**Keywords:** Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero, Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Positive change, Nirukthi, Wyakarana