



# GOTABAYA

MAJOR GENERAL KAMAL GUNARATNE

WWV RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhil



*An officer,  
who takes initiative  
over and above  
the normal call of duty!*

*- General Cyril Ranatunga  
VSV rcds.psc*

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## Other books by the author

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පාතාලයෝ	(2020)

# Dedication

To all

the war heroes who made the supreme sacrifice  
in the line of duty on behalf of the nation and its people,

to all

the brave disabled war heroes and their family members,

and

to all

the parents who gifted their sons and daughters to  
the armed forces to save our motherland from

the scourge of terrorism,

may this book be

a lasting tribute!





## From the author...

Having joined the Sri Lanka Army on 31 August 1981, I underwent basic officer training at the Diyatalawa Military Academy, passed out as a Second Lieutenant, and was commissioned into the Rajarata Rifles, an infantry regiment at that time. Whilst there were many senior officers serving in that regiment worthy of emulation as role models, Major Gotabaya Rajapaksa was one of the most significant.

Displaying a fine personality both in uniform and in civilian attire, it did not take me long to realise Major Gotabaya Rajapaksa was a conscientious and brilliant senior officer, although a man of few words. He was highly regarded by all the officers of the regiment, as well as by the rest of the ranks. By receiving the opportunity to serve under him as a junior officer, I was able to gain a fine understanding of a senior officer's responsibility and role.

Referred to as "Gota" by the senior officers, he was an amiable person. However, he was a completely different person when carrying out his duties, working with single-minded dedication. The veracity of that observation can be understood, when one considers the role he played later upon the formation of the Gajaba Regiment, as the second-in-command of its First Battalion, and later as its commanding officer. The best testament of his courage is undoubtedly his four kilometre-long crossing of the Jaffna Lagoon, leading his men under enemy fire, during Operation Thrivida Balaya, launched under the leadership of Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa, to rescue the soldiers and police officers under siege at the Dutch Fort in Jaffna.

It would be accurate to state that, all the officers and rest of the ranks of the Gajaba Regiment were grieved, when Lieutenant Colonel Gotabaya Rajapaksa retired from military service and emigrated to the U.S. The sudden loss of the leadership of such an astute military officer, was a big loss for the entire army. However, after twelve years he returned to his motherland, to provide leadership to end the period of fear and panic, suffered for more than two decades by Sri Lanka's people.

This book includes extensive descriptions of the service rendered by Gotabaya Rajapaksa as defence secretary, as well as his dedication, vision and outlook. I am delighted to have received the opportunity to write about such a colossus, from whom a developing society can obtain a fine example. A great son of Sri Lanka who has performed a noble service for the nation, Gotabaya Rajapaksa has been elected by Sri Lankans as the seventh executive president. I wish him strength and resolve, to continue to serve his country to the utmost.

**Major General Kamal Gunaratne**

**WWV RWP RSPUSP ndc psc MPhil**

## Foreword

Being invited to pen a few words as a foreword to this very readable book is a rare privilege and an opportunity for me to be elated. The reasons for my elation are two-fold. On the one hand, the subject, former military officer, former war-winning Defence Secretary and the present Head of State of Sri Lanka, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (GR) is vast and encompassing enabling an author to write copiously and eloquently. On the other, Major General (Retired) Kamal Gunaratne, through his lucid and incisive writing has done justice to the subject matter by making the book, “Gotabaya”, extremely readable.

Undoubtedly, this book is a valuable addition to the literature on the contemporary history of this great country. The author has well utilized his in-depth knowledge of the Sri Lankan military history focussing on the unique struggle against the most brutal terrorist outfit the world has known in the recent past. Kamal has, in addition, put to good use his wide and deep understanding of the unique subject presenting the reader a superb compendium of little-known facts that anyone interested in Sri Lankan affairs should comprehend in order to understand the vicissitudes and complexities of Sri Lankan politics and governance structures.

Tracing the advent of Rajapaksas into national level politics from Weeraketiya in the deep South and their consolidation as the most powerful and much loved political family in Sri Lanka today, Kamal presents a vivid and factual description of GR’s ascendancy to the coveted position of Defence Secretary during the time Sri Lanka was engulfed in a war against brutal terrorism.

The opening chapter, "To serve is an offence" entices the reader to move from chapter to chapter with enthusiasm. Kamal presents the events of that fateful day at the second Trial-at-Bar unsettling the reader's emotional fabric but giving the reader an initial glimpse of the grit and strength of GR's character. It is quite evident that the then Yahapalana government and its leaders saw GR as the biggest threat to their political continuance and staying in power at any cost. Numerous unfounded allegations to implicate GR and put him behind bars prove this beyond any doubt.

Subsequent chapters deal with the early life of GR and how Ananda College influenced his life to make him the disciplined leader we see today. Kamal has articulated in a clear and comprehensive manner the richness and the depth of the rural elite to which GR, his siblings and their much-loved parents belonged. Coupled with Ananda's highly acclaimed education, GR's rural endowments made him a person replete with not only sophisticated leadership qualities but also kindness towards disadvantaged and downtrodden in our society. His present actions as the President of Sri Lanka clearly show the humane character he possesses. The book presents the reader with many examples to buttress this fact.

GR's feats as a clear-thinking military officer culminating as the Defence Secretary are well known. Nevertheless, Kamal exposes the reader to many and varied details to provide the reader with very interesting and useful information about GR's military career and how he, as Defence Secretary oversaw the entire war effort against the terrorists. To an avid reader, these details provide interesting reading.

A unique feature of this book, perhaps, is GR's myriad accomplishments on which Kamal lucidly writes. Urban development is a case in point. When President Mahinda Rajapaksa in April 2010 charged GR with the subject of urban

development, there was open criticism from some quarters, political as well as non-political. The transformation GR brought about in the urban environment, particularly in Colombo, won plaudits from international figures. Restoration of landmark buildings and edifices to their present glorious state speaks volumes of GR's ability to be a visionary and town planner par excellence.

Kamal's writings on how GR revamped the then Apollo hospital to make it one of the best-run private hospitals in the country is quite interesting reading. Here is the Defence Secretary who could think like a business magnate. Kamal brings it out extremely well. I believe this amazing ability of GR has today enabled him to look at Sri Lanka as a country that could be revamped, refined and re-delivered to the people.

His approach to many long-standing public issues and his out-of-the-box quick solutions confirm that GR is not just an experienced military officer but also a visionary statesman.

If I were to comment on every chapter Kamal has compiled so zealously, I might run the risk of making the reader bored. Forewords must be kept somewhat brief. I have resisted the great urge within me to write about my long and close association with this great human being, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, and my impressions of this unique leader.

Retired Major General Kamal Gunaratne's compilation of a wide range of facts and information of Sri Lanka's Seventh Executive President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Kamal's close association with GR for well over 35 years make this book a 'must read' for every Sri Lankan to understand many critical events that have shaped our contemporary history. As President Gotabaya Rajapaksa unwaveringly steers this country towards Vistas of Prosperity, Sri Lankans, by reading this book, will begin to understand that finally we have collectively found

the leader who could make the life of every Sri Lankan safe,  
peaceful and prosperous.

**Lalith Weeratunga**

Principal Advisor to the President (Since Nov. 2019)

and

Former Secretary to the President (Nov. 2005 – Jan. 2015)

August 20, 2020

Colombo

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