

**SHOULD WE FIGHT AMONG  
OURSELVES AND LET OUTSIDE  
FORCES OVERRIDE US?**



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SPEECH MADE BY THE PRESIDENT  
HIS EXCELLENCY R. PREMADASA,  
AT THE PINNACLE UNVEILING CEREMONY  
AT THE CHITTAVIVEKASHRAMAYA  
WICKREMASINGHEPURA, BATTARAMULLA  
1ST JUNE 1989

Most Reverend Maha Nayake Theras,  
Reverend Sirs and Friends,

Today is the first day of the month of June or the month of Poson. Today is a very important day for all of us who are Sri Lankans. It was in the month of Poson that Sri Lankans became a civilized nation. We were able to learn and practise Buddha Dhamma because of Arahant Mahinda who arrived in Sri Lanka with the concurrence of King Dharmasoka. On the Poson Day we not only came to know about Buddhism but also we gave up weapons we had in our hands. King Devanampiyatissa on his way to the jungle for hunting deer, met Arahant Mahinda, listened to his sermon and came to know the noble doctrine of Lord Buddha after which the King dedicated himself to the principles of Avihimsa (non-violence) giving up Himsa (violence) on a Poya Day. Today is the beginning of that memorable month of Poson. Further, I saw the Leela calendar today. Important events of each day are mentioned in this calendar under the respective days. What is mentioned there for today is the bringing of the branch of the Sri Maha Bodhi by the Nun Sanghamitta in 247 B.C. during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. This too adds to the importance.

Also, Gam-Udawa '89 is being inaugurated today at Mahiyangana. At the Mahiyangana Raja Maha Vihara, where the famous Mahiyangana Dagoba stands, a pirith ceremony takes place tonight. Therefore, it is a great pleasure for all of us to have participated in a meritorious activity of this nature on this important day at this Chittavivekashramaya built by the Sri Sucharita Movement. Today is the day on which we can start paying homage to this Dagoba. Its pinnacle was laid by our Most Venerable Agga Maha Panditha Balangoda Ananda Maithreya Maha Nayaka Thera.

In a little while by opening this pinnacle our Mahanayake Thera will make it possible for all of us to worship it. This Chittavivekashramaya was established by Sri Sucharita Viyaparaya, to provide peace of mind to our people. We found that a place like this was necessary for us to get rid of various violent feelings, bad feelings, wrong feelings from our minds. We saw a place like this in England. That is the Amarawathi Temple. It was Agga Maha Panditha Balangoda Ananda Maithreya Thero who gave advice on establishing this Temple. We thought while the Maha Thero is going from country to country preaching, teaching and practising meditation, there should be a place in Sri Lanka also to get his advice, like this Chitta Viv-ekashramaya.

We established this Vivekashramaya on his advice and approval in this land of 16 acres. The Chairman of Nawaloka Group, Deshabandu H. K. Dharmadasa, Mrs. Dharmadasa and their family helped us in this venture. When I requested him, he agreed to do everything possible towards the endeavour. All these

including the Sanghavasa, Dharmasalawa and this Chaitya were financed by him. Other members of the Sucharita Movement also helped in all possible ways. While appreciating all their good work, I confer merit on all of them.

You will see that this Chaitya is decorated with the six-coloured Buddhist flag. I saw a similar decoration about six months back at the Thuparamaya Chaitya. It was done on the instructions and advice of the late Maho Sumedha Thero. We are happy that we were able to decorate this Chaitya today with the coloured Buddhist flag in this manner. Large number of people helped us in this venture. Especially, a number of people from Moratuwa and Panadura helped us with this decoration. This is a decorative draping for the Chaitya. It can be removed when necessary. We got this Buddhist flag due to the efforts of Maha Upasaka Henry Olcott who came from America. He was the creator of this six-coloured Buddhist flag accepted by the whole world. This symbolises 'Budu Ras' emanating from the Lord Buddha. Therefore, we can think that 'Budu Ras' is coming out of the Chaitya.

We all try very hard in various ways to obtain peace of mind. We work, earn and do all these to have peace of mind. This is a period where there is no peace, not only in our country, but also in various other countries in the world. It is a period we all lack peace of mind. When we think of the various violent incidents happening today in our country, it is difficult to have any peace of mind.

But it is only at a time like this we really need the peace of mind. Lord Buddha taught us how to control our mind. He has taught us how to control our thoughts and feelings.

It is at a time like this that we can get the guidance, advice and assistance from the Dhamma taught by the Lord Buddha. We need such guidance and advice specially at a time when we face disturbances and violence. The unity of the people was disrupted due to various incidents. Fear and doubt crept into the minds of the people. The situation continues without any change. Everyone is praying and hoping that peace and tranquility would be restored in the country.

Buddha Dhamma teaches us that we cannot achieve peace by resorting to arms. Lord Buddha has taught us that peace and kindness cannot be achieved by wars, creating violence and disturbances. He has shown us through example of incidents which took place during his time how we can achieve peace. Lord Buddha has taught us to achieve peace not through arms but by understanding that comes through kindness, compassion, forbearance, consultation and compromise.

Many sections of our society were pitched into many disputes and conflicts because they failed to solve various disputes and conflicts through discussion and exchange of views among themselves. This situation took a serious turn when certain sections took a hasty decision to resort to violence to solve their problems.

What was the result? Our country was engulfed in conflicts. The people were gripped by fear and doubt. When the country is wrought with conflicts and the people gripped with fear it would result in the disruption of peace and unity. It will also, pose a threat to the independence, sovereignty and unitary character of the country. When we ourselves do not

have the strength to solve our problems, when we harm ourselves by injuring and killing each other with arms, outside forces could easily override us. We are a nation which had been under colonial rule for four hundred and fifty years. We were able to regain independence shedding colonial rule because all sections of the people were united, irrespective of race and religion.

If we divide ourselves, fight among ourselves, armed with weapons, and kill our own people, our freedom will disappear and we will again become a subject nation. We must remember this.

These days many people ask me when the Indian Peace-Keeping Force will leave our country. We must reflect on the reasons that made the Indian Peace-Keeping Force to come here. One reason was that we took up arms to fight among ourselves to solve our problems. I like to state at this moment that the Indian Peace-Keeping Force has started moving out. This commenced when I became the President. You may remember that I told you during the Presidential Election campaign that when I become the President I will take steps to send the Indian Peace-Keeping Force out of the country.

I like to state that even before I made this request, Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi started pulling them out. His High Commissioner met me and told me that they knew the promise I had made and that it should be kept. He told me that they are prepared to fall in line. He further told me that they will take them back in stages. India responded even before I requested them. I was very happy about it. I was

grateful to Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and the Indian Government for making arrangements to take the Indian Army back. Already between 7000 to 8000 soldiers have left Sri Lanka. Now what is required is to expedite this process and send them back early. All of us must assist in this process.

At a time when the foreign force which came here is moving out from our motherland, we must work with patience. We must not become violent. Having a foreign force in an independent country is a slur on its self-respect. It devalues the freedom of the country. At this moment we must work peacefully and patiently. We must expedite their departure. I will inform India about it in a day or two.

India sent this Peace-Keeping Force to restore peace in the North and East at the request of our former President. We all know that India has repeatedly assured us that anytime the President of Sri Lanka were to make a request they will take their forces back. They started pulling them back even before I told them. I intend to ask India to take their forces back. It has become a necessity now. Even recently Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has said that they will be pulling out the Peace-Keeping Force from Sri Lanka. Indian Government has assured us that they will do so at any time we want.

We must remember an important incident that happened during the recent past. We must not forget that a number of Groups who were directing an armed struggle have come into the democratic process. In July the Indian Peace-Keeping Force will be completing two years in our country. In fact the IPKF which came to

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restore peace had to engage in fighting. We all know that a large number of Indian soldiers also died as a result. Some suffered serious injuries. Their kith and kin have become orphans.

It is not only the soldiers of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force who died. Many of the soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army as well as Police Officers who proceeded to the Northern and Eastern Provinces to restore peace in those provinces had to sacrifice their lives. Their families and children have become orphans and are really suffering. A large number of persons who served in the Sri Lanka Army and the Police are injured, disabled or deformed. They have been reduced to this plight in view of their commitment to preserve the unity and the integrity of our country. We are taking action to provide necessary assistance and relief to such orphaned families.

We know that children and the other members of these families are absolutely innocent persons who are in no way involved in any of these activities. They include members of all ethnic groups – Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. Waves of crimes have swept across the country causing destruction, death and suffering to many. We are indebted to these brave servicemen. We should all pay our respects to them. Our Government is taking every possible action to grant relief and assistance to the affected families.

Now I would like to ask you the previous question again. What made the Indian Peace-Keeping Force to come to this land? Every one of us should ask this question ourselves. What made our soldiers and members of the public to pay with their lives? It is our



own conscience only that can answer this question. We did not think of solving our internal problems peacefully and with mutual understanding. Failure to do so on our part has brought us to this plight. Therefore, we should ask ourselves whether we should allow ethnic, racial and parochial conflicts to continue further paving the path for external forces to intervene in the sovereignty of our motherland. Everyone of us should pay our attention to this aspect of the problem.

Why can't we come to a settlement through mutual discussions and negotiations? On a day like today it is quite appropriate to make such a firm resolution. Today marks the dawn of Poon month. It is the month in which this Country received the noble gift of the doctrine of non-violence. On this great day we are gathered here to participate in this supreme religious ceremony.

If we are determined we could make this entire month free from violence and pave the way to discuss our problems. I am prepared to discuss with anyone about these problems. If there is any matter to be attended to by the Government, I will myself direct negotiations on this matter. If what you want is a cessation of hostilities and laying down of arms before coming to the negotiation table, I am prepared to accede to that too. They could even keep the arms during such discussions but not use them. This sacred month of Poon is the best time for such a move. It is our duty to act boldly to solve our problems ourselves. If we don't, our future generations will undoubtedly condemn us and brand us as traitors.

We are bringing disrepute to ourselves and our independence if we continue to keep a foreign army

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within our country because of conflicts among ourselves. It will also be an act of treachery perpetrated on our country. Therefore, I intend, as I stated earlier, to expedite the withdrawal of the IPKF. I hope to make such a request soon to Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and to the Indian Government. The Indian Government and the Indian Prime Minister are awaiting a request from me and the Government to carry out such a troop withdrawal. We are thankful to the Indian Government for starting the withdrawal of the IPKF troops even before we had requested them to do so. What I would be requesting now would be to expedite the withdrawal of the IPKF.

The end of July 1989 will mark two years since the IPKF came to Sri Lanka. Therefore, I will request the Indian Government to try as far as possible to complete the withdrawal of the entirety of the IPKF troops by the end of July. I would like to see the last of the IPKF troops leave Sri Lanka by the end of July. Today there are about 45,000 IPKF troops in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is not possible to withdraw them in a day or two.

They have to leave by ship. Therefore, I believe that if the troops withdrawal is expedited it would be possible to complete the withdrawal by end of July. We will never forget the assistance and help given by the Indian Government to Sri Lanka. Even the Buddha Dhamma was a gift from India. It was Emperor Dharmasoka who took steps to establish Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

While it was a great help to have sent the Peace-Keeping Force to this country at the request of our former President, recalling the Peace-Keeping Force

back to India will also help us greatly at this moment. India's action to call back the Peace-Keeping Force during the next two months will be considered as a favour. I have no doubt that India will do so. I hope to make a friendly request to that effect shortly.

There is another reason as to why the Peace-Keeping Force should be taken out of this country. Last year's SAARC Conference – was scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka. However, as you are already aware it could not be held here owing to the uncertainties that prevailed in this country at the time. Hence the Conference was held in Pakistan. This year's Conference has to be held in Sri Lanka. It is our duty to do so and we have assumed this responsibility and we must fulfil it. This regional association has been formed by India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka; the seven independent South-Asian countries. We must strengthen our regional co-operation. Leaders of Governments of these countries will arrive in Sri Lanka in November this year. We must hold this conference at high level. It would help the strengthening of friendship among neighbouring countries. It is the duty of our country to strengthen activities of SAARC.

My Government is already in the process of making arrangements for the event. We must accord a cordial and honourable welcome to the Leaders of the Governments of the South-Asian region. They are all our friendly countries. These countries are bound together culturally. Our people are eagerly waiting to welcome these leaders. We hope to accord a cordial and rousing welcome to all the Heads of State and the Heads of Government including Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. Can Sri Lanka host such a Summit with

self-respect when a foreign army is operating in the country? This time it is also not possible to do away with it. We must hold this Conference as an independent and sovereign country.

It is also because of this reason that I thought that it is extremely essential that the entirety of the IPKF be withdrawn by the end of July. We as an independent country must have the self-confidence to play our role as equal partners and work unitedly with other brother nations. You will admit that it is difficult for us to host and participate in such a Summit Conference while keeping a foreign army in our country.

At a time when we are working to send back the IPKF troops to India I would appeal to all not to say anything or act in a manner which will obstruct this move. Everyone who wishes to safeguard the sovereignty of the country should assist to make this programme a success by desisting from violence and provocative action.

You are aware that it is because to our own faults, disputes amongst us, our own provocative actions and our own militant actions that resulted in a foreign army coming to our country. But this is what people of all communities, Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher say now:- "We might well be grateful to India for sending this Army to help us. The Army which came to keep the peace had to wage a war itself. As a result , a large number of its members too lost their lives. But the problem is very much still with us. Now we have had enough of this peace-keeping by the IPKF. Now let us sort out our problems ourselves. Let us do everything possible to help the early withdrawal of the IPKF."

You will realise the type of confusion that will prevail if we escalate violence and disturbances. I am confident that everyone who honestly wishes to see that the IPKF troops are withdrawn will see to it that they do not indulge in violence or provocative actions.

I would appeal to all to make a firm resolution to act with patience and desist from violence during these two months. Let us be determined to send back the IPKF troops, maintain our self-respect and host the forthcoming SAARC Summit with self-respect and dignity as a free and sovereign state. It is our duty on a day like this to resolve to desist from violence and provocative actions. As I stated earlier, this month of Poson marks the defeat of violence and the triumph of non-violence. I consider it as an act of Providence that I was able to participate in such a meritorious act on the day of the dawn of the month of Poson.

You are all aware that our Agga Maha Panditha, Most Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maithreya Maha Nayake Thero is a world reputed scholar and a self-disciplined Bhikkhu. He has devoted his entire life to the upliftment of the Buddha Sasana.

On the strength of the merit acquired by the Maha Nayake Thero, I appeal to every ethnic group of this country to give up differences of all kinds and to pave the way for the dawn of a peaceful era. With that appeal I most respectfully invite our Maha Nayake Thero to uncover the pinnacle and provide us with the opportunity of paying homage to this Dagoba.

I wish to conclude by paying my tribute once again to Deshabandhu H. K. Dharmadasa, Mrs. Dharmadasa and their children who generously contributed to have this Dagoba constructed and to all others including the Sucharita Movement who helped in no small way to make this venture a success.

