

BOLGODA CHAT

A Life Dedicated to Engineering and Education

An interview with
Prof (Emeritus) S. R. De S. Chandrakeerthy

A founding member of the University of Moratuwa, Prof. S.R. De S. Chandrakeerthy's legacy is one of dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to education and research. For more than four decades, he shaped not only the University of Moratuwa but also generations of engineers whose contributions continue to benefit Sri Lanka and the world.

The beginnings

Born in Galle in 1945, Sammu Raghu De Silva Chandrakeerthy spent his entire childhood at the Richmond College, Galle. When he left Richmond College in 1963, he was honoured with a Gold Medal as the best student in the Science Stream in 1963 at Richmond College, to qualify for higher studies at the University of Sri Lanka.

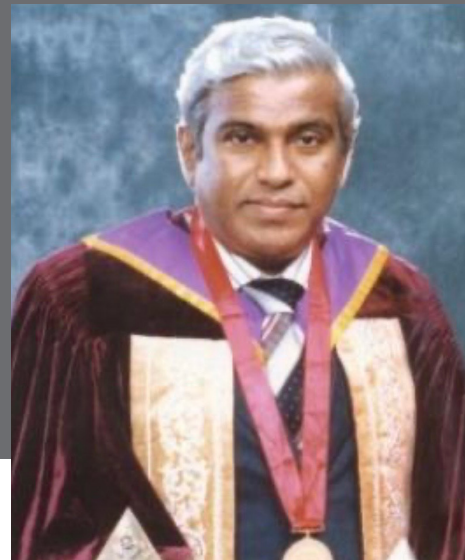
He spent his first year in the Colombo branch of the University of Sri Lanka, and second, third and fourth years at the Peradeniya University of Sri Lanka. His Last three years of university life was very challenging, as the new Engineering Faculty was separated by the Mahaweli River, from the rest of the fully developed Peradeniya University, and the Engineering Faculty library facilities were difficult, and the required laboratories were not fully constructed. In 1967 he graduated with a Second-Class Honours Degree in Civil Engineering

UoM days

S.R. De S. Chandrakeerthy initially worked as a lecturer at the Ceylon College of Technology from 1967 and became an Assistant Lecturer at the Katubedda Campus in 1970. Two years later, he secured a UNESCO Scholarship to University of Sheffield in England, to specialize in Structural Engineering. Upon completion of a PhD, Dr Chandrakeerthy returned to Sri Lanka in 1975. Subsequently he was promoted to the grade of Senior Lecturer in 1979, Associate Professor in 1985, and Professor in 1995. He became the first academic at The University of Moratuwa to earn merit-based promotions to the ranks of both Associate Professor and Professor. During this period, he also taught and researched at University of Sheffield in UK, University of Edinburgh in UK, Loughborough University of Technology in UK, Drexel University in USA, University of Manitoba in Canada, Monash University in Australia and RMIT University in Australia.

Prof. Chandrakeerthy has conducted extensive research on areas of Structural Engineering with special reference to local application issues that have arisen in Sri Lanka. As professional structural engineering practice relies heavily on extensive use of National standards and Codes of Practice for control of materials, writing specifications and designing and drawing of structures, he has contributed extensively to the development of Sri Lankan Standards and its Codes of Practice. This has created in improving the knowledge to practicing Structural Engineers, which are of direct relevance in the local context of Sri Lanka. His work resulted in 12 international journal articles, 51 local publications, and many more conference presentations.

Around the year 1980, University of Moratuwa decided to develop a unit on Construction Engineering Management, within the Civil Engineering Department. Prof. Chandrakeerthy spearheaded the task and brought to a successful completion. He played a significant role in separating the "Institute of Technology of University of Moratuwa" from "the University of Moratuwa", and move it to a different location.



Prof (Emeritus) S. R. De S. Chandrakeerthy

Words of wisdom for today's academics

First and foremost, never treat your students as inferior to you. Always remember that while you may be teaching one or two subjects, your students are managing many at the same time. Provide your lecture notes in advance so they can focus on understanding and engaging with the material, rather than simply copying it down. Be kind and approachable, and create an environment where students feel happy and motivated to learn. Above all, ensure that while the teacher works diligently, students can engage, relax, and truly absorb knowledge.

"When I retired from UoM, I decided not to deal with Structural Engineering any more, except living a strict Buddhist life. Only exception was to keep in contact with a large number of my students. I always remember by their names".

[https://doi.org/10.31705/BPRM.v5\(1\).2025.10](https://doi.org/10.31705/BPRM.v5(1).2025.10)

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