

Dharmasiri,

First of all, I should formally introduce myself. I am Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell (known to all as Nancy), President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester.

I am absolutely delighted to be able to formally mark your receiving a University of Manchester Medal of Honour - the engraved medal should be with you shortly. I am only sorry though that unfortunately this can't be done in person on 27 April as we had planned and hoped.

I would like to take a few moments to say exactly why the University feels you are so deserving of this award, which is our highest Medal award, and one which is not awarded all that frequently.

As an institution, we wanted to recognise that you are a courageous award-winning film and theatre director, actor and screenplay writer, with a career that has spanned over five decades in Sri Lanka. We know that you have spent a lifetime on creations focusing on social justice and empowerment of deprived groups in your country, something that aligns with our University's mission.

We also know that you have been honoured already in several ways including by the City of New Orleans, Louisiana which conferred The International Honorary Citizen award on you in 1990. This was followed by your winning several national awards such as Kala Soori, Kala Keerthi and Swarna Sinha Lifetime Achievement Award from the Government of Sri Lanka.

Of particular interest to us is how you combined your artistic talents to highlight some of the major social issues in your country such as the exploitation of rural women and the marginalisation of the poor. The University is also recognising you for the activities you have engaged in which were aimed at drawing attention to and promoting the important contributions made by minority communities in the cultural arena in Sri Lanka.

And, of course, we are aware of your collaborative projects with two of our own academics – Professors James Thompson and Mahesh Nirmalan- in which together you utilised the power of the arts, including theatre, as a means of addressing the needs of all communities that suffered as a result of the prolonged conflict in the country.

The relationship between the UK and Sri Lanka goes back several centuries and has been strengthened more recently by the Sri Lankan diaspora who are part of the social, academic and professional fabric of not only the UK but also Greater Manchester and our University. In this context it is a great pleasure for me to confer this medal on one of Sri Lanka's most highly acclaimed artists of modern times.

On behalf of the University, I would like to end by thanking you for all of your contributions - long may they continue to inspire the people of your country and the wider world.

We hope you will treasure this so richly deserved award.



Medal of Honour  
April 2022

Dharmasiri Bandaranayake

Citation