

## **Department of English**

### **Professor Manique Gunsekera**

The Department of English, affectionately and informally called 'the Kadu Faculty' symbolizes the growth and national recognition accorded to the University of Kelaniya as a whole. Like the university, the English Department was initially assigned a cameo role amidst the larger cast of superstars of the Faculty of Arts, particularly the departments teaching the Classical Languages of Sanskrit and Pali, and Buddhist Philosophy. However, with the increasing role played by the University of Kelaniya on the national stage, and especially during the time of the 're-organisation' of the university system, our university became the centre of excellence for languages. Along with this, the sun began to shine on the fledgling Department of English which has now risen to the position of national importance it enjoys today.

Reading for a degree in English at the University of Kelaniya was the privilege of a few for a long time. In the late 1960s, the Department had one English Honours candidate and a small number of lecturers. The one student subsequently became a flamboyant lecturer, Mr. Ranjit Goonewardena, nicknamed 'Goonda' and his even more flamboyant lecturer and mentor was the famous poet, translator and man of letters, Regi Siriwardena. The situation changed in the 1970s, with the 're-organisation scheme' of the universities. Students who wished to read English for their Bachelor of Arts degree from anywhere in Sri Lanka, had to register at the University of Kelaniya, at its Peliyagoda Administrative Branch. This was the turning point for the Department. It was also the end of an era for the Peradeniya Department of English, whose brilliant lecturers had to move to the University of Kelaniya, possibly with some reluctance.