

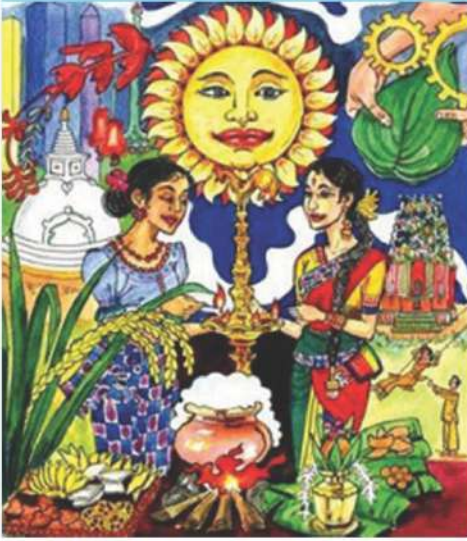


CCIS

Centre for Contemporary Indian Studies
Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

April-May-June 2021 Volume 1 No. 4

CCIS Wishes a Happy Sinhala and Tamil New Year!



On the 13th and 14th April 2021, Sinhala and Tamil New Year or Aluth Avurudda was celebrated by most of the Sinhala and Tamil people in Sri Lanka. It is considered as an important national holiday in the country. The New Year is the time when the sun moves from Pisces (*Meena rashiya*) to Aries (*Mesha rashiya*). All the activities during the New Year period are performed according to the astrological calculations which are known as the auspicious times. New Year is also marked by celebratory treats like *kiribath*, *kavum*, *kokis*, *aluva* etc. This period of time is also identified with significant changes in nature like blossoming of the flowers like Erabadu and koha's cry. Moreover, New Year is an essential national festival which brings the families and different cultures together.

Certificate Course in Hindi Language Syllabus Review Committee

The Centre for Contemporary Indian Studies organized a two-day Hindi Language syllabus review session under the leadership of the Director of the Centre for Contemporary Indian Studies, Chair Senior Professor Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage on 8th and 9th April 2021 at the CCIS Conference Room. Professor Sangeeth Rathnayake (*Head, Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka*), Dr. Nilanthi Rajapaksha (*Senior Lecturer, Department of Languages, Cultural Studies and Performing Arts, University of Sri Jayewardenepura*), Ms. Ridma Lansakara (*Academic and Research Officer, National Institute of Language Education and Training (NILET)*) and Hindi Research Scholar and skilled Hindi Teacher Ms. Wathsala Samarakoon participated as subject experts. The syllabus review committee revisited the previous Hindi Language syllabus and made necessary amendments according to the SLQF recommendations.





'With Gandhi Ji in Ceylon' a book written by Mahadev Desai and published by S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, India in 1928. 2nd (1998) and 3rd (2007) editions were printed by Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publishers, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka with the ISBN 955-599-122-7.

Readers of 'Contemporary' can read this book continuously March issue onwards.



Gandhi ji in Ceylon *(Contd.) from March Issue 2021*

Two Chettiar friends whose acquaintance we made in Chettinad - Sjts. Kashivishvanath Chettiar and Pichappa Subramanyam - had volunteered to precede us to Ceylon and organise the Chettiar merchants there. The Chettiars' meeting, the first in Ceylon, was a triumph of their efforts, and their contributions-those of the clerks more than of their masters-were a credit to them. The students' contributions were no less than those by students in different places in South India. The labour meetings, a mammoth gathering, - which had to be addressed through two interpreters simultaneously, was a triumph of orderly arrangement and organisation, and their handsome purse and the quiet work of their volunteers were entirely the result of Sjt. Goonasinhe's endeavours. In very few places in India does one find labour so well organised as here. The barbers - Maruthwakulas - only twenty or so in number came to Gandhiji's residence with their handsome contribution of Rs. 400.

Just as in Madras, the intellectuals in Colombo exacted from Gandhiji their toll of speeches, but it was inevitable. Those in Madras had no excuse having heard him frequently, but for the Ceylonese this was the first occasion.

The reception by the Buddhist Congress was an impressive one - over five hundred priests in their yellow robes seated in the spacious hall of the Vidyodaya College to chant their benediction on Gandhiji. Gandhiji's reply* contained in brief his tribute to the Enlightened One, and his conception of the ultimate unity of Buddhism and Hinduism. He tried to clear what in his opinion were the three misconceptions about Buddhism and Hinduism and in doing so summed up his message to the Buddhists.

The speech** at the Y.M.C.A. was not an address to the Ceylonese Christians, but to all the Christian missionaries going to the ends of the earth to preach the gospel. It was delivered with a warmth and passion perhaps never before reached during recent years. It was an appeal to each and all to turn the searchlight inwards, 'to live the life, to live the religion and to let it speak for itself.' It was a speech originally intended to enlist the sympathy of the audience in his search for truth, and also its sympathy for the cause for which he was living and for which he would love to die. But the discussion of the first became so elaborate and intensive that he had no time left for dealing with the bearing of Jesus' message on Khadi.

* (vide pp 43 for full speech in the book) ** (Vide pp. 60 for full speech in the book)

CHAPTER II LIFE AND RELIGION The Second Week

The visitor to Ceylon, so long as he is in Colombo, sees nothing beyond the beautiful harbour, which with 20 million tonnage of mercantile vessels entering and leaving the port, ranks sixth in the world, and beyond some of the parts of the town which remind one of Mylapore and Chowringhee. In modern towns what can one expect to find but a sort of dull drab uniformity of huge piles of buildings and of a superficial culture? And Colombo, where the 'unifying' agency of the Western civilisation has been perhaps busier than elsewhere, has the look of any other modern town. But as you go into the interior, - or as



the Ceylonese say 'Upcountry', - you begin to have the smell of Ceylon's 'spicy breezes'.

We motored along the coast north up to Chilaw and thence entered the hill districts near Kurunegala, finally reaching Kandy, having taken numerous places on the way. It is through a magnificent road with forests of huge rubber and cinnamon trees, with tea, coffee and cocoa in between, that one reaches the beautiful city encircled by an amphitheatre of hills. But the proud Kandyan tells you, as you begin going into raptures over the scenery around you, that you have seen nothing yet. I realised the truth of the remark when we went next day to the central district of Badulla and from Badulla to Nuwara Eliya, and thence to Hatton and other tea plantations and back to Kandy, and then again from Kandy to Colombo. *(Contd.)*





'The Anagārika Dharmapāla [1864-1933] A Biographical Sketch' a book written by Bhikshu Sangharakshita and published by Dreams Line Ad, Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2011. Readers of 'Contemporary' can read this book continuously March issue onwards.

ANAGĀRIKA DHARMAPĀLA

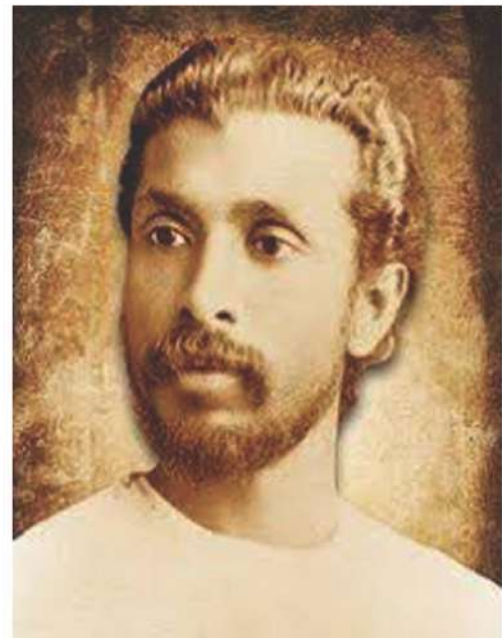
(Contd.) from March Issue 2021

Both Don Carolis and his young wife Mallika ardently desired a son, and when they knew that a child would be born to them their joy was great indeed. But although they both desired a son the reasons for which they desired him were by no means the same. Mudaliya Hewavitarne thought of a successor in the family business, while his wife dreamed of a bhikshu who would guide the erring footsteps of the Sinhala people back to the Noble Eightfold Path from which they had so long been led astray. Every morning before sunrise the young bride, who was not yet out of her 'teens, would gather a trayful of sweet-smelling five-petalled temple flowers and offer them, together with coconut-oil lamps and incense, at the feet of the Buddha-image in the family shrine, praying to the devas that she might bear a son who would rekindle the lamp of the Dharma in a darkened land. Every evening, too she would lie prostrate in supplication before the silent image, which was a wooden replica of one of the great stone Buddhas of Anuradhapura, the ancient city whose very name awakes in every Sinhala heart an unutterably deep nostalgia for the temporal and spiritual emanations from the liberated minds of old passed through that image and penetrated the receptive mind of the Sinhala maiden, steeping the lotus of her aspiration in the dews of kindness and peace, and purifying her heart and mind until they were a fit receptacle for the Great Being who was to accomplish what even in her wildest dreams she had scarcely dared to hope for. As her time drew near, bhikshus were invited to the house, and on the full moon nights of three successive months the air was filled with the vibrations of the sacred pail tests, as from dusk to dawn they chanted from the holy books. Then on the night of September 17th, in the pettah district of Colombo, where the national religion and culture had fallen to the lowest pitch of degeneration, there came, as though to strike the evil at its very heart, the birth of Dharmapala like a vivid flash of lightning from a black and stormy sky.

Young David Hewavitarne, as he was named, grew up in an atmosphere of traditional Sinhala piety. Every day, morning and evening, he would kneel in the shrine with his father and mother, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, promise to observe the Five Precepts and chant the verses of worship with which millions of people have for five and twenty centuries expressed their gratitude to, and adoration of, Him Who showed humanity for the first time the Way to Nirvana. Nor was the practical application of the Dharma forgotten, for sweetly and reasonably his mother would point out to him any infringement of the precepts, and gently chide him into the careful observance of them all. It is a commonplace of educational psychology that the influences to which a child is subjected to during its earliest years more or less determine the whole course of its subsequent development, and the biography of Dharmapala provides us with no exception to this rule. His deep and spontaneous devotion to the Buddha, his instinctive observance of the plain and simple rules of the Dharma through the complexities and temptations of modern life, his ardent love of all that was pure and good, as well as his unsparing condemnation of whatever was unclean and evil, were undoubtedly the efflorescence of seeds which had been, planted in the fertile soil of his young heart by his mother's loving advice and his father's austere example. The spectacle of a life such as his, so fruitful in good for the whole of humanity, should

be sufficient to convince anyone who might doubt the advisability of bringing up Buddhist children in a traditional atmosphere, and imparting to them from their earliest years both instruction and training in the sublime Dharma. Without that early religious training young David Hewavitarane might have grown up to wear top hat and trousers, speaking English to his family and Sinhalese to the servants, like thousands of his contemporaries, and Dharmapala, the Lion of Lanka, might never have been born, and the greatness of the difference which such a calamity would have made to India, Buddhism, and the world, it is now impossible for us to gauge. It should never be forgotten that piety of the old Sinhala type was the plinth and foundation of Dharmapala's whole character. Though well versed in his religion, he was not a scholar; though he wrote inexhaustibly, it is not as a writer that he will be remembered. For more than forty years he worked and organized and agitated unceasingly, but not even here is the secret of his character to be discovered. Fundamentally he was a Sinhala. Passionately devoted to his religion as only a Sinhala, after centuries of civil oppression and religious persecution, could at that time have been. With him religion was not an intellectual conviction but an instinct. He lived and moved and had his being in Southern Buddhism, and after centuries of stagnation it lived and moved and had its being again in him. Herein lies the secret of his appeal to the Sinhala people. He was not a detached scholar looking down at their simple but profound piety from the outside, as it were, but flesh of their flesh, spirit of their spirit, feeling as they felt and believing as they believed. In him all that was good in the national character was raised to a higher degree than they had dreamed was possible in modern times, and seeing him they saw and recognized themselves not only as they had been of old but as they yet might be again.

(Contd.)



HAPPY VESAK

Buddhism is one of the oldest religions in the world. The Buddhists especially in South Asia, Southeast Asia and across the world celebrated Vesak on the 26th May 2021. The festival commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and the ultimate passing away of Lord Buddha. Buddhism is the most supreme gift from India to Sri Lanka. As to the other Buddhists across the world, Vesak is an important festival to the Buddhists in Sri Lanka as well. On Vesak day, the devotees observe the eight precepts and practice good deeds. It is considered as a special time in the year which enlightens the humankind towards the path of truth, love and peace. Throughout the Vesak day, the Buddhists are engaged in moral activities like alms giving, distributing food to the poor, freeing caged animals etc. Additionally, at the night time of Vesak, electrically lit pandals or thoranas are set up which showcase various stories from the jataka tales. Not only pandals, but also flamboyant Vesak lanterns also known as *Vesak kuudu* are hung in front of the houses and streets which connote the light of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. Dansalas are also organized by different community organizations and donors which provide free food and drinks to the people walking by.

RATANA SUTRA CHANTING



High Commission of India, Colombo in collaboration with Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC/Radio Ceylon) organized a Ratana Sutra Chanting Ceremony for the health and well-being of people in India and Sri Lanka in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic on the 6th of May 2021. This ceremony was broadcast as a live programme through the Hindi Service of the SLBC. Maha Sangha from various Buddhist temples, **Dr. Rewant Vikram Singh** (Director, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre), **Mr. Eldos Mathew Punnoose** (First Secretary, Political and Development Cooperation) from the Indian High Commission, **Mr. Jagath Wickramasinha** (Chairman), **Mr. Chadrapala Liyanage** (Director General) of the SLBC and **Senior Prof. Upul Ranjith** (Director, CCIS, University of Colombo) participated in this historical event.

IMPORTANT EVENTS



Senior Prof. Chandrika N. Weyemane
Vice Chancellor,
University of Colombo,
Sri Lanka



Mr. Vivek Sharma
Second Secretary, Commercial and
Economic Wing, High Commission of
India, Colombo,
Sri Lanka



Senior Prof. Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage
Director,
CCIS, University of Colombo,
Sri Lanka



Dr. Nihal Hennayaka
Director,
CCU, University of Colombo,
Sri Lanka



Prof. B. Nishantha
Webinar Moderator,
University of Colombo,
Sri Lanka



Resource Person, Mr. Anuj Agrawal
Managing Director,
Gyan Dairy Products,
Uttar Pradesh, India



Resource Person, Ms. Indrani Fernando
Chairperson, Philips Hospital Pvt. Ltd.,
Kuala Lumpur,
Sri Lanka

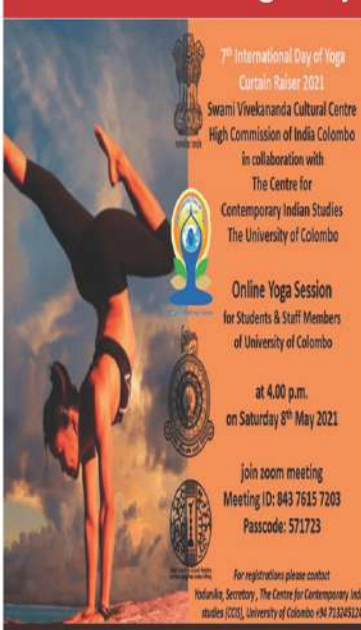


Ms. Yodunika Seneviratne
Secretary, CCIS,
University of Colombo,
Sri Lanka

A webinar on 'Becoming a Successful Entrepreneur' organized by the Centre for Contemporary Indian Studies in collaboration with the High Commission of India, Colombo and the Career Guidance Unit, University of Colombo was held on the 12th June 2021. The aim of organizing this webinar was to promote SME in Sri Lanka, motivate young undergraduates on entrepreneurship and to share personal experience of becoming an entrepreneur, challenges and how to face them. More than 100 undergraduates of the University of Colombo participated in this webinar. Mr. Anuj Agrawal, Managing Director, Gyan Dairy, Uttar Pradesh, India and Ms. Indrani Fernando, Chairperson, New Philip Hospitals (Pvt) Ltd., Sri Lanka were the resource persons of this webinar. Senior Prof. Chandrika N. Wijeyaratne, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo explained the objectives of the webinar. Prof. B. Nishantha moderated the event, vote of thanks was made by Senior Prof. Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage, the Director, CCIS, and Ms. Yodunika Seneviratne, Secretary, CCIS compered the event. Mr. Vivek Sharma (Second Secretary, Commercial and Economic Wing, Indian High Commission) and Dr. Nihal Hennayaka (Director, Career Guidance Unit, University of Colombo) also participated in this event.

CCIS Director participated in International Webinars

International Yoga Day



Chair Senior Professor Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage [Director, CCIS] was invited as the guest speaker by Dr. Nisha J. Tharayil (Principal, Sree Narayana College for Women, Kollam, Kerala, India) for the International Webinar on 'Evolution of Contemporary Hindi Literature' held at Sree Narayana College for Women, Kollam, Kerala, India from 21-30 May 2021.

Prof. Asha Shukla (Vice Chancellor, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India) invited the Director, CCIS as a guest speaker for the International Webinar on 'Role of Buddhism and Buddhist Teachers for Global Harmony and Peace' held at the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India on 26th May 2021. This webinar was jointly organized by the Bharathiya Shikshan Mandal, ICCR, Heritage Society and UNESCO.



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Asst. Editor: Yodunika Seneviratne
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Web: <https://ccis.cmb.ac.lk/#> FB: <https://www.facebook.com/ccis.cmb/> Email: <director@ccis.cmb.ac.lk>