

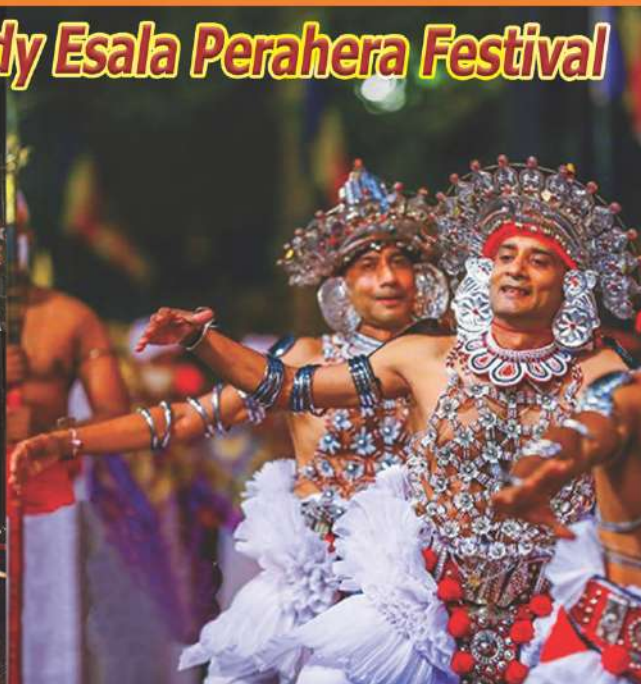


CCIS

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

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Kandy Esala Perahera Festival



This year, the *Esala Perahera* in Kandy started on 13th August 2021. It is celebrated to honor Buddha's sacred Tooth Relic which is held at the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy as well as the three Gods *Naatha, Vishnu, Kataragama* and Goddess *Pattini*. The festival is one of the most spectacular festivals in Asia. *Esala Perahera* continues for ten days and filled with hundreds of dance troops, drummers, fire dancers, elephants with colourful costumes, *nilames* etc. The first five nights of the festival are called *Kumbal Perahera* and the last five are *Randoli Perahera*.



Celebrating 75th Independence Day of India in Sri Lanka

The 75th Independence Day of India was celebrated on 15th August 2021 at *Parama Dhamma Chetiya Pirivena, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka*. The event was conducted by *Ven. Dr. Mapalagama Wipulasara Maha Thero* and the *Mahasangha*. During the event, Indian flag was hoisted by *Ven. Dr. Wipulasara Maha Thero* and a special *Ashirvad Puja* was conducted for the well-being of people of India and Sri Lanka owing to COVID-19 pandemic.



New High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India



His Excellency Milinda Moragoda was appointed as the new High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India and he presented his Letter of Credence to the President of India Sri Ram Nath Kovind on 22nd of September 2021 in New Delhi. He is a graduate of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Switzerland. Prior to his appointment as the High Commissioner, His Excellency Milinda Moragoda served as the Cabinet Minister of Justice and Law Reforms. He has also served as the Minister of Tourism, Minister of Economic Reforms, Science and Technology and Deputy Minister of Policy Implementation during his 9 years of parliamentary career.



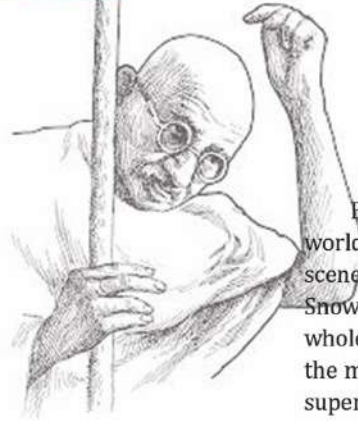
'With Gandhi Ji in Ceylon' a book written by Mahadev Desai and published by S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, India in 1928. 2nd (1998) and 3rd (2007) editions were printed by Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publishers, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka with the ISBN 955-599-122-7.

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



Gandhi Ji in Ceylon

(Contd.) from April-May-June Issue 2021



European travellers have written pages upon pages on the exquisitely lovely scenery of this natural park of the world, and have tried to describe the kaleidoscopic vision that passes before one's eyes as one moves from scene to scene. Some of them rest content with comparing the boldness of scenery around Nuwara Eliya with that of Snowdon, whilst others find in the neighbourhood of Badulla something more charming than the Sussex downs. The whole prospect, another exclaims, is 'more like enchantment or a dream of fairyland, than sober reality. The truth of the matter is, that on such vast subjects as these great works of Nature, as the Countess of Oxford says, "even the superb vocabulary of a Ruskin will probably not be more illuminating than what the schoolboy writes in the visitor's

book at Niagara, 'Uncle and all very much pleased. Better perhaps than attempting the impossible is the attitude of these who stand in silent prayerful awe, because they cannot find utterance to express their sense of the might, majesty and glory of the Almighty's works, and the humiliating feeling of their own littleness.'

To Gandhiji, as to Wordsworth, 'there was not a nook within that solemn grove, but were an apt confessional,' and he wondered why man was unable to satisfy himself with these imposing temples that Nature had reared before him, and sought to find his God in brick and mortar which he called temple!

Gandhiji, concluded his long speech at Badulla with this reference to the curse of drink: "As I was coming to-day from Kandy to this place, I passed through some of the finest bits of scenery have ever witnessed in my life. Where Nature has been so beneficent and where Nature provides for you such innocent and ennobling intoxication, and gives you invigorating air to breathe, it is criminal for man or woman to seek intoxication from that sparkling but deadly liquor.

"But that brings me the people of this enchanted isle. Out of a total population of 4.5 million people, 2.9 million are Sinhalese, and 1 million Tamilians, out of whom over half a million are working as labourers on the tea, rubber and other estates. Ceylon has before it therefore not only the problem of the harmonious relationship between the Sinhalese and the Tamilian, but also of the conditions of labour on the estates.

The bulk of the population which is agricultural finds its livelihood from the paddy and coconut crops, which latter covers a million out of the total four million acres under cultivation. The tea industry which has grown to stupendous proportions - 17 crops of pounds of tea being exported every year-is principally in the hands of the European planter. Rubber, of which the area planted has increased sixteen times to what it was in 1904, is another principal industry, 121/2 per cent. of the world's production being claimed by Ceylon. That also belongs largely to the European planter. Among minerals the graphite industry is substantial, providing employment for about 30,000 Sinhalese men and women. But the bulk of the labour in the Island - whether on the plantations or on the plains and roads - is drawn from Tamil Nad in India. No doubt the immigrant comes to Ceylon because he cannot make both ends meet in Tamil Nad, parts of which are subject to years of successive famines. But there is little doubt also that the Tamilian is necessarily more industrious than the



Sinhalese and is usually preferred by the estate managers. This disinclination to work is no doubt due to Nature's bounties. Even Knox, the English captive, in 1681 found the Sinhalese 'not laborious and industrious, incapable of utilising the 'plenty of cotton growing in their own grounds, sufficient to make them good and strong cloth for their own use.'

The Buddhists have still retained not only the caste system of Hinduism, but even untouchability. In spite of the first command of Lord Buddha, they eat meat and some of them even beef, in spite of the fifth command the 'civilised' ones think it respectable to drink liquor, and in spite of the last command they have enshrined what they regard as a genuine tooth relic of the Buddha in fine cases of gold, two of them being inlaid with rubies! In an article written some time ago, Anagarika Dharmapala thus bewailed the lot of his co-religionists: "The flower of the land, the rising generation of Sinhalese youth, has come under the influence of Christian propagandists. Practices which were an abomination to the ancient noble Sinhalese have to-day become tolerated under the influence of Semitic sociology. In the days of Sinhalese kings no liquor was sold, no animals were slaughtered.' 'Apes of the West,' 'more denationalised than any other people' 'strangers in their own land' are some of the epithets that Ceylonese writers themselves have given to the present generation of English-educated men and women. (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 April- May-June Issue 2021



The child of Mallika Hewavitarne's dreams was now five years old, and the time had come when the already ardently devout current of his temperament was to be impinged upon by influences which would give to it a definite direction and obstacles which would serve only to increase its natural impetuosity and inherent momentum. His first contact with the world which lay outside the charmed circle of family life, where the influence of the Dharma permeated everything like a sweet and subtle perfume, came when he was sent to a girls' school where the majority of pupils were Burghers, that is to say, of mixed Dutch and Sinhala descent. It is necessary to observe at this crucial point, where for the first time the innate genius of David Hewavitarne came in contact with forces intrinsically hostile to all that he loved and believed in, that throughout the whole of his long life his character remained wonderfully integrated and harmonious. Whether confronted with a problem of personal conduct or business ethics, whether faced by the customs of his own beloved Island or the bewilderingly unfamiliar civilizations of the West and the Far East, he stood firm and unshaken, seeing and judging all things in the clear light of the Dharma, and doing straightforwardly and without fear or hesitation that which he knew was good and right. The suggestion that he might win a lawsuit by judicious bribery was scornfully rejected, with the characteristic comment that though the winning of the Buddha Gaya case was dearer to his heart than anything in the world he would rather lose it than resort to such detestable methods. When he saw the Niagara Falls, with their millions of tons of water thundering down every minute, he merely remarked that it was the most impressive illustration of the transitoriness of human personality that he had ever seen. So long and deeply had he meditated upon the truths of the Dharma that they had become part of his character, so that to think, speak and act in accordance with them was natural to him. But in spite of its inherent nobility, perhaps even because of it, such a character must sooner or later come into conflict with the cowardly conventions and mean hypocrisies of the world, so that it is perhaps inevitable that the life of a man like Dharmapala should be one unceasing battle against injustice, untruth and unrighteousness in every conceivable form. Naturally, the conflict did not begin until several years after the period with which we are now concerned, but it is interesting to note that even at this time questions rose to his lips which his mother could not always answer, and which his father thought better repressed by the exercise of paternal authority. Although he never experienced any diminution of his affection for the religious traditions of his family, he could not help becoming aware that those traditions were by no means universally accepted, nor refrain from trying to find some explanation for this difference. Gradually his childish mind came to understand that the world was divided into Buddhists like his mother and father who loved the Dharma, and Christians like his school teachers who hated it and were seeking to destroy it; but already he knew on which side of the gulf which lay between the two parties he stood, and for whom it was his duty to do battle. But in these early years he gave no indication of the attitude he was insensibly adopting, and even when, at the age of six, he

joined the Pettah Catholic School (later St. Mary's School) and was one day asked to kneel down and kiss the ring of the visiting Bishop Hilarion Sillani, he obediently did so, probably without fully understanding the significance of the act.

The next school which David Hewavitarne attended was a Sinhalese private school, where he remained for two years, leaving at the age of ten. "The first lesson was taught", writes Bhikkhu Devamitta Dhammapala *Reminiscences of my Early Life*, *Maha Bodhi Journal* Vol. 41, Nos. 5 & 6, p. 152), "according to the old Sinhalese custom of offering betel to his teacher and making obeisance to him". He also writes of the teacher that he was a strict disciplinarian who impressed upon his pupil's tender mind the necessity of keeping everything clean and using plenty of water to keep the body physically pure. The lesson appears to have been well learned, for till the end of his life Dharmapala was almost fanatically particular about the cleanliness and tidiness of the objects of his personal use and of his surroundings. In the Sinhalese school he had to go through all the Sinhala books which were taught in the temples of Ceylon, with the result that he obtained a thorough grounding in the language and literature of his native land. ... (Contd.)



Awarding Padma Shri to Late Hindi Professor Indra Dassanayake and Deshabandu Dr. Vajira Chitrasena



The President of India, His Excellency *Shri Ram Nath Kovind* presented the *Padma Shri* award to the late Hindi Professor Indra Dassanayake's daughter Ms. Wathsala Ruwani Dassanayake, on behalf of Late Hindi Professor Indra Dassanayake on 8th November 2021 at the 'Padma Awards Investiture Ceremony' held at *Rashtrapati Bhawan*, New Delhi, India.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and the Indian High Commissioner, His Excellency *Shri Gopal Baglay* awarded the 'Padma Shri' to Deshabandu Dr. Vajira Chitrasena at the Temple Trees in Sri Lanka on 17th November 2021.

The Late Professor Indra Dassanayake and Deshabandu Dr. Vajira Chitrasena were awarded the 'Padma Shri' for their special contributions towards dance, literature and education.

Celebrating Gandhi Jayanti



The *Param Dhamma Chaitya Pirivena* in Ratmalana, Sri Lanka together with the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, High Commission of India commemorated the 152nd Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October 2021. This day is also celebrated as the United Nations International Day of Non-Violence. The Deputy High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, *Shri Vinod K. Jacob*, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and inaugurated a photo exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi. In addition, Venerable Mahasangha led by Dr. Mapalagama Wimalasara Thero, Chief Incumbent and Director of the *Param Dhamma Chaitya Pirivena*, along with Christian, Muslim and Hindu religious leaders, namely Sister Chandrika Liyanarachchi, Honourable Hibatulla Bari Moulavia, and Venerable Udayakumar Sharma Kurukkal, graced the occasion with their presence. The event comprised of offerings to the Buddha as well as sermons and speeches about Mahatma Gandhi in Sinhala, Hindi, Burmese, and English languages by Venerable monk students of the *Param Dhamma Chaitya Pirivena* and lay devotees.

'Jataka Tales Audio Book' Project Commenced



Ven. Rambukana
Siddhartha Thero



Dr. Rewant
Vikram Singh



Dr. W. A.
Abeysinha



Chair Senior Prof.
Upul Ranjith



Wathsala
Samarakoon

The Jataka Tales Audio Book is a joint project by the Centre for Contemporary Indian Studies (CCIS) and Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), High Commission of India initiated in relation to the 10th Anniversary of the CCIS and 75th Independence Day of India with the intention of extending a rare benefit for the differently abled brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka. The project is implemented under the guidance of Chair Senior Professor Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage, Director, CCIS as a long term project and its first phase is to release an audio book of 50 Jataka stories selected from '*Jatakakathaa*' under the theme of 'Good Advice'. The recordings of the project commenced at the Studio **PROJECT 2020 RECORDS** on 03rd November 2021. The concept of the project is by Dr. Rewant Vikram Singh (Director, SVCC), written in simple Sinhala by Veteran Literate Dr. W. A. Abeysinha, supervision by Veteran Lyrics writer Ven. Rambukana Siddhartha Thero. The Voice Artists of the project are Chair Senior Professor Upul Ranjith (Director, CCIS) and Ms. Wathsala Samarakoon (TV and Radio Presenter). Theme music is composed by the Director of the CCIS.

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