

Maya Puwath

Volume 12, Number 04, August 2016
Bimonthly Newsletter from MGCAANA



"What we are is the result of what we have thought, is built by our thoughts, is made up of our thoughts. If one speaks or acts with an impure thought, suffering follows one, like the wheel of the cart follows the foot of the ox.

What we are is the result of what we have thought, is built by our thoughts, is made up of our thoughts. If one speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows one, like a shadow that never leaves.

"They insulted me; they hurt me; they defeated me; they cheated me." In those who harbor such thoughts, hate will never cease.

For hate is never conquered by hate. Hate is conquered by love. This is an eternal law. Many do not realize that we must all come to an end here; but those who do realize this, end their quarrels at once."

Dhammapadaya

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Editorial

It is with great pleasure that I invite my dear sisters of MGCAANA to read this issue of our newsletter. It was a pride and a joy for me to edit Maya Puwath for the first time.

Most find summer as a time to travel or spend more quality time with friends and family. As the summer ends, I hope you gathered wonderful memories in this summer.

I see Maya Puwath not only as a way to reach members with announcements relating to MGCAANA but also as a medium to share ideas, celebrate achievements and upsurge talents. Therefore, I encourage all members to contribute to the newsletter by sending articles, poems, photographs you take while travelling or any other creative item that fellow sisters will enjoy and admire. Maya Puwath also welcomes you to share pictures of art and other creativities of your children.

This is the time of the year students who start school in fall term come to the US. Therefore, existing members can educate Mayans who come to the US about MGCAANA and ask them to join us. New members will bring new friendships and talents to our alumni body. Therefore, it's important to strengthen MGCAANA by contributing to the growth of membership.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee and all members who join hands in this foreign land to help and encourage each other to conquer the obstacles and achieve success. I am truly grateful to mother Mahamaya for building us great foundations in our lives and most of all for giving us friendship and a sisterhood that lasts a lifetime.

Dilshani Ranasinghe

Issue Editor, August 2016

A Note form The President

My Dear Maya Sisters, Daughters, and the Honorary Members,

I hope all of you took time to enjoy the summer, to visit with your friends and family, and also to explore far away beautiful places. Now the children are back in school and I believe all of us are settling back into the familiar rhythms of our daily lives. Before soon the summer will be over, the shadows will grow longer, and the evenings little cooler, reminding us that the Fall season is around the corner. Looking at my garden, the flowers also tell me the same story. The first blooms of the spring were long gone, but the mountain blue spirea, dusty rose color sedum are beginning to bloom. I know it will be a riot of color in few weeks. Not only that we are beginning to get visits from the migratory birds. The cotton tail deer also beginning to forage our garden- we are finding that the deer are picky eaters; they love the roses, carrots, apples in that order, but not the kale nor the zucchini! The rabbits and the lonely squirrel that frequent our garden are not scared of us anymore; over the years we gained their trust. How wonderful!

Before I continue to talk anymore about my wild friends, I want to share with you a decision that we took at a BOD meeting. As a result of a discussion at the June 21, 2016 BOD meeting, I gave a challenge to the board of directors to promote a practice of quality writing in our Newsletter. We agreed that each director would commit to writing an article for the future Maya Puwath issues. The BOD named this as the "The President's Challenge". I volunteered to write the first article in this series. Please stay tuned for the future issues with the articles by the BOD. I sincerely thank the board of directors for accepting this challenge.

I encourage and invite each of you to write an article at least once in a while to the Maya Puwath. Consider it a gift to your parents and the teachers for giving you an excellent education. Writing encourages thinking, exploration, comprehension, and there is no bigger gift than being able to communicate efficiently with each other. Good communication opens the doors to new frontiers; it builds trust and develops true friendships. I look forward to reading your articles in the coming issues of the Maya Puwath.

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You will find my article in this issue. I named it "Tread Gently". I dedicate it to my parents for bringing me up, giving me a world class education, encouraging me to read and write at a very young age, accepting me for what I was when I was a child , and teaching me to live in harmony with the nature. I hope you'll enjoy reading the article.

I wish you a peaceful time ahead.
Thank you.

Indrani Gunawardana

The President, MGCAANA (2016-2017)

August 25, 2016



The Miller Lake (Elevation 10,000')

Nestled in the beautiful Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.

(Photograph by Indrani Gunawardana)

MGCAANA News

Scholarship Opportunity for MGCAANA Members MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship *Selection Committee*

MGCAANA UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 2016-2017

The Selection Committee of the MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program is looking for Mahamaya alumnae who demonstrate outstanding academic achievements, leadership and active participation in extracurricular activities and also a significant level of financial need. Intended to cover the cost of textbooks for a semester, scholarships of **\$500.00** each will be awarded to two (2) candidates.

APPLICATION PERIOD & DEADLINE: September 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016

Award Notification: By January 31, 2017

Please visit our website at www.mahamayaalumnae.org to view and download the scholarship application. If you have any questions about the MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program, please e-mail us at mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com.

We look forward to receiving your applications!



The Choice to My Children

by Nilmini Dorabawila

You have to decide which way to go
If you want to go up or stay down below
Right or left the choice is yours
Not I or someone else can decide

To do right or wrong to stand up or down
To fight with your might or accept it somehow
To let yourself go and be free for the day
Or to think up the list of chores today

To accept a drink or to smile and say no
To try the new drug or to shrug it away
To smoke a cigarette and pretend it's nice
Or to see how it kills the organs inside

To fuss about food or to enjoy the dish
To shout at your mom or thank her with a kiss
To help your dad when you see his need
To help your sister and make a wish

To be angry at things that don't matter at all
To bring down the house for what matters all
To burn yourself for things that will make you fall
Or to humbly accept and move your thoughts on

To marry or not to be happy or not
To fight to be right or to fight for rights
To be peaceful and content and let things as they are
Or to sit back and relax watch the day passing by

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To give your hand to those in need
To lend your shoulder and let weep
To pat your pal and say it's okay
Another day is on its way

To plant a seed and grow a tree
To take an axe and cut the tree
To start a war or make peace
To smile humbly and accept defeat

To win the hearts of humanity
Or to destroy the moments of beauty
To understand what is reality
Or to enter the world of vanity

To show your strength silently
To love no matter what deeply
To open your door to the pounds
Of someone trying to break your compound

To guard your thoughts no matter what
To let the angry words go by
Not to let Ruffles matter so much
To keep your mind like a silent pond

The choice has and will always be yours
To be like a big tree in a storm
Although the leaves might scatter and fall
The core of the tree will withstand all

The choice is always yours my little being's
Always yours....



Tread Gently

by Indrani Gunawardana

Introduction

The world we live in today is far more different from what it was as short as 50 years ago. We made incredible advances in science and technology. We sent a man to the moon and brought him back safely. We eradicated polio, small pox and many other deadly diseases. All thanks to the ingenuity of the human brain. However, along the way we have damaged our fragile blue planet in an irremediable manner. The photographs from the space show breathtaking views of our planet- a gentle arc surrounded by a thin blue line. My heart aches when I see these photographs; I am so moved by the beauty and the promise it holds for all living forms. I worry about the future; I worry that the graceful trees and the bald eagles will be lost forever and that the future generations will not hear the howl of a wolf in the middle of the winter night nor the happy chatter of the frogs after a mid-summer afternoon's thunderstorm. I worry that the rain forests will wither and disappear under the log smith's axe; I shed tears over the majestic polar bears stranded on a piece of an ice sheet floating in the vast arctic sea without a hope of returning home and facing a certain demise.

How did we get here?

Earliest records show us that the *Homo habilis* (our first bipedal ancestor) evolved around 2.8 million years ago. They had small brains about the size of a chimpanzee. The fossil records show us that they were capable of making stone tools. Over the next million years the brain volume increased and the fossil records indicate the arrival of

Homo erectus and *Homo ergaster* in the scene. Their brains were twice as big as their ancestors. They were the first to make complex tools and first to use fire. This may have rendered their ability to hunt efficiently, which translated into more protein in their diet which resulted in the evolution of bigger brain *Homo sapiens*.

The modern humans evolved in Africa around 50,000-100,000 years ago from a common ancestor either from *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo rhodesiensis* or *Homo antecessor*. They migrated out of Africa replacing *Homo erectus* and other Homo species. The development of language and culture took place around 50,000 years ago which gave rise to the era of modern *Homo sapiens*. Then around 10,000 years ago (upper Paleolithic period, which is the end of the last ice age) our ancestors changed their habits from big game hunting to small game hunting. At the same time, they started to experiment with wild grains and other plant materials. Within a very short time span (around 8000 years ago) our ancestors have domesticated the plants and livestock, mastered the art of pottery, smelt copper, and learnt to build and live in the cities. The invention of the wheel took place only about 7000 years ago and about 5500 years ago humans started to write, first in cuneiform. From then on the human kind marched slowly through the ages until we reached the industrial revolution in 1760 which started in Great Britain and then spread to the rest of the world. Since then we have been on a never ending quest to conquer the planet without any regard to the consequences of our actions. We have been self-absorbed in our quest and have foolishly disregarded the laws of the nature.

Population Growth and the Impact on the Planet

The discovery of newer medicines and advancements in farming practices translated into longevity and population growth. In 1950 the world population was about 2.6 billion, and, as of March 2016, the population tripled bringing that number to 7.4 billion. Today we are already over consuming our resources. Approximately we use resources of 1.6 times more than the capacity of our planet to satisfy our needs in the forms of consumables (usage and wastage). The more resources we use, it will take more time to replenish the lost resources. Some of the resources may never get replenished. Unfortunately there is no recovery period in between. If this trend continues, we'll need 2 planets to provide our needs within the next 15-20 years. As

we all know we have only one planet to live and bring up our young. The hopes and the dreams of finding another planet are mighty, but it will not happen in a foreseeable future. The universe is expanding at a rate that we may never be able to hop onto another blue planet. Without a failing our plant has provided and continues to provide what it takes for each of us to live. We all are transients on this planet; we live long enough to pass our DNA to the next generation. The survival of our DNA depends on the health of the planet. Therefore, it is our duty to give some back, make amendments, respect all living beings, and learn to live in harmony with the nature.

Our Carbon Footprint on the Planet

Most of us living in the North America live in air conditioned houses, use a vehicle powered by precious fossil fuels (coal, petroleum and natural gas) and eat three or more hearty meals a day. This is all at the expense of our planet. The fossil fuels have made our modern lifestyles possible. Humans have been using fossil fuels (coal) dating back to as far as 1100 BC. There is a finite amount of fossil fuels lodged in the crevasses and nooks of the earth's crust. Unfortunately, we have been depleting this natural resource at an alarming rate. We may not be able to control every aspect of our resource consumption, but we all can make conscious efforts to reduce the use of natural resources and our carbon footprint on the planet. If we look at the food industry, the animal farming can be listed as the single most destructive factor to the environment. The current practice of animal farming produces more greenhouse gasses than the emission from all the vehicles combined. Carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and chlorofluorocarbons are classified as greenhouse gases and they contribute to the climate changes.

The cows, the sheep and the goats are ruminants by nature. During the food digestion they produce methane gas. In addition, animal waste accumulating in the acres of cesspools also produces vast amounts of methane. According to the current data, the livestock industry is responsible for producing 37% of the methane gas that is being released to the air. Methane is ~23 times more warming than carbon dioxide. Therefore, it is imperative to reduce the release of methane gas into the atmosphere. In the United States, the EPA has shown that the animal farming is the major contributor to methane gas emission.

The animal farming also produces large quantities of carbon dioxide as well. Feeding the animals, transporting them to the slaughter houses and then killing them, processing the meat, and the transportation of the meat to warehouses and supermarkets all require vast amounts of energy. The refrigeration coolants can release ozone depleting fluorochlorocarbons into the atmosphere. The energy used for most of these activities come from the fossil fuels.

Astounding 65% of nitrous oxide is produced worldwide during the process of meat and dairy products. Nitrous oxide is 300 times more warming than the carbon dioxide. Therefore, its impact on climate change is very significant.

In the United States 70% of the grain grown is fed to farmed animals. To produce a pound of beef it takes 1800-4000 gallons of water depending on which reference you look at. On average the cattle is kept alive only for 18 months - a very sad short life. Aside from being sentimental and caring about the animal welfare, the animal farming is not a sustainable practice. It takes a huge toll on our planet. Here are some sobering facts. According to Smithsonian reports, the land the size of seven football fields is being cleared at every second to create space for animal farming. This is at the cost of the biodiversity and the habitat loss.

Nearly 80% of the land cleared in Amazon basin is now use for cattle farming. The deforestation of the virgin tropical forests in the Amazon basin comes with a steep price tag. Amazon forest cover absorbs a huge amount of carbon dioxide for photosynthesis acting as a massive carbon dioxide sponge or a storage unit. The loss of forest cover will result in increased amounts of free carbon dioxide molecules in the atmosphere which will contributing to the climate change. The Amazon basin deforestation also could result in the reduction of the rain and snowfall in the western United States. Already the western states are suffering from severe water shortages and massive forest fires. With further reductions of seasonal and annual precipitation, one could envision even more drier conditions resulting in destructive wild fires.

The forests are home to about 70% of the animals that live on our planet. When the forests die out, the wild animals also will lose their habitat and will go extinct. Most of

the time there is not enough time for the animals to adapt to a new eco system or to find a new home. They have evolved over millions of years to fit into that particular eco system. The adaptation and the evolution will not speed up to satisfy the wanton behavior of the humans. For a pound of meat we lose a huge chunk of our planet along with the precious biodiversity.

In the United States 80% of the agricultural land is used to grow crops for the farmed animals. Globally about 30% of land mass is being used to raise animals for food. According to the data from Natural Resource Conservation Service, it takes roughly 2 acres of grass/grain to feed one cow for a year. This much land will roughly feed 6 people on a low fat vegetarian diet year around at a lesser cost to the environment. As I mentioned above it takes about 1800 to 4000 gallons of water and roughly about 16 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef. This is a very inefficient way to produce food for human consumption. On the other hand, it takes only 180 gallons water to produce a pound of whole wheat bread. These numbers are indeed very sobering.

Health Concerns

The animal farming practices produce massive amounts of particulate dust and contaminants. According to a report by PETA, a study done in Texas found that feedlots and dried animal excrements produce 7,000 tons of particulate dust every year. This dust contains pathogens (bacteria, mold and fungi) which are harmful to human and animal health. Many farm workers suffer from respiratory problems because of this situation. This "dust" also get carried all over the world by the air currents. When the dust settles on the snow cover, it speeds up the snow melt resulting in the spring time flash floods that destroy property and lives; it also means less water for the reservoirs and the farmers during the crucial planting and growing seasons. A reduced snow cover on polar caps results in the warming of the earth. The year 2015 marked the warmest year in the history of the planet since we started keeping records. The animal excrement in cesspools eventually wind up in our water ways polluting our precious water.

Consuming meat is detrimental to our health. Unlike the fruits and vegetables the meat is difficult to digest. Evolutionary wise we are not evolved to consume large quantities of meat. Today an average American consumes about 0.36 pounds of meat a day. Our hunter/gatherer ancestors never had this much of meat in their daily diet. They worked hard to kill an animal, and when they did, they shared it with the rest of the tribe. It is very difficult to believe that our ancestors had meat in their diet every day. It would not have been possible. The animal fat is full of artery clogging saturated fats and the red meat consumption contributes to the increase in low density cholesterol levels. Few years back the heart disease among the people in developing countries was very low, but now the trend is reversing. The reason is with the current economic development and prosperity more people have access to meat and other food rich in fat and sugar. Another find is that the colon cancer is more common among the meat eaters. The Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), a fatal spongy degeneration of the brain and the spinal cord is also caused by eating infected meat. This disease is spread by the protein particles called prions and takes several years for the symptoms to appear in cattle. During the BSE epidemic in the United Kingdom in 1986-1998, 4.4 million cows were slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease to humans. One can only imagine the carnage.

According the UN records we need to make a conscious effort to shift to a plant based diet to avoid further damage to the planet's health and our own health. A diet rich in plant based material is healthy, devoid in animal fats and will be easy to digest. Simply put, switching to a vegan/vegetarian diet reduces our carbon footprint on the planet. Not only that, we can prevent/reduce the animal cruelty by saying no to the animal farming. When we take all these facts into account, the vegetarians are the ultimate environmentalists.

Closing Remarks

Our history on this planet is fleeting compared to that of the dinosaurs who roamed and thrived on our planet for 165 million years during the Mesozoic period. We have been living here a mere 2.8 million years counting our first bipedal ancestors. That is just a hiccup in the planetary history. About 65 million years ago the dinosaurs started to die out and went extinct. We may inherit the same fate sooner than we expect, and

we may not need a meteoroid to collide with our planet to inherit that fate. What makes us think that we are invincible?

Where I live in Colorado the scenery is incredibly beautiful; the west side is flanked by the snow capped Never Summer Mountains of the Rocky Mountain range, and to the east the rolling pastures stretch as far as the eye can see. The sky is a vast blue expanse, many days without a hint of a cloud. In the spring time these pastures are dotted with the cows and the calves. It tugs my heart strings. At a glance the scenery is immensely peaceful, but it is only a sham. I know why the calves are there; I know how long they will live and I have a very difficult time looking into their beautiful big brown eyes. There are days I see the cattle being rounded up into the pens. They have no space to move. They wait under the vast blue skies innocently until the cattle carriers come. Those days I wish to forget, but I cannot. I know where their journey ends. I weep inside, I chant "may no harm ever come to you." Someday, my wish will be granted, I am sure of that. I believe in the power of goodwill and the goodness of the human spirit. I know I am not alone in my quest. I wish to tread my sacred planet gently. I want to leave no foot prints. I want our children to inherit a beautiful and peaceful world where they can live in harmony with all living beings. If each of us does our part in our own ways, then we can accomplish this task and leave a legacy for many generations to come.



Mayan Wins 3rd Place!

GCE O/L top scorers meet the President

Following is a post from the official website of the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



Top ten scored students of the GCE O/L exam – 2015 met President Maithripala Sirisena at the Presidential Secretariat today (Aug. 23, 2016).

The President commended the skills of these students and extended his warm congratulation to them. He presented financial gifts and laptops to the students.

The top scorer, S. Sathsarani Hettiarachchi from Vishaka Girls' School in Colombo, the second scorer K. K. Samal Punsara from Nalanda College Colombo and the third scorers; R. Maleena Rathnayake from Devi Balika Vidyalaya, **R. M. Indeewari Umayanga from Mahamaya Vidyalaya** in Kandy and the students who won the places up to ten met the President. The parents of the students also were present at this occasion.

Minister of Education Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, State Minister V. Radhakrishnan, Secretary to the Education Ministry W. M. Bandusena also were among those participated.

Vashinya Premananda from Colombo International School in Kandy who became the youngest web creator by creating a website at the age of nine also met the President with her parents. She completed her Bachelor of Computer Science Degree at her age of eleven. President Sirisena who wished her a bright future presented her a gift.

Tofu Curry, A Substitute for Meat

by Sujatha Werake

Ingredients:

- 1 lb firm tofu
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 1 broccoli floret
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 onion
- 1 stick ginger 2 inches long and grated
- 1 inch cinnamon stick crushed
- 3 cloves
- 1 tsp chili powder (or little more)
- 4 garlic cloves chopped
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1/4 cup Ketchup or tomato sauce
- Salt to taste

Method:

Cut tofu into chunks and add to boiling water with a pinch of salt and let stand for 10 minutes in hot water. Then drain and squeeze the water carefully because tofu can break. Heat a non-stick pan with 3 tbsp oil and pan fry gently until all sides are golden brown. Add more oil if needed.

Then to the pan add chili powder, chopped garlic, grated ginger, chopped onion, cinnamon, cloves turmeric, curry powder and salt. Stir well and gently.

Then add the peppers, broccoli, and ketchup/tomato sauce and mix. Close the lid and cook on low heat for 5 minutes. Mix again. Close the lid and turn of the cooker. Let it sit there for a five minutes. Serve.



**A PUBLICATION OF THE
MAHAMAYA GIRLS' COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
OF NORTH AMERICA**

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