



# MAYA PUWATH

Volume 4 Issue 5– October 2008

## EDITORIAL

Hi Everyone....

Once again I take pride in writing this editorial for Maya Puwath. Hope all of you had a wonderful summer and are enjoying the colorful fall season. The previous edition of Maya Puwath was beautifully created by our newest member of the editorial committee, Pamuditha and hope you all enjoyed the unique stories and articles about weddings.

This edition of Maya Puwath focuses on the topic "Life as Immigrants," and I believe it will reflect most of us personally. The Maya community in North America has done many great things for our old school and touched many lives. I'm thankful that all of us immigrants were able to reach out and support the school that gave us the foundation for the life we lead today. Mahamaya College gave us the knowledge to make this journey away from our homeland and succeed. To come so far from our mother land and make this foreign land our home and to have created our own niche, takes confidence and courage. And the best part of it all is belonging to the family of MGCAANA. It gives us the ability to give something back to the school that gave us our beginning.

MGCAANA has had many successful projects in the last four years: the ongoing scholarship program is something that is of great help to many a child, the commemorative volume "The Guiding Light" is a tribute to our school. And then there are many other great achievements which are a tribute to our success as immigrants.

A very special thank you goes out to our Board of Directors, committee members and the officers for keeping MGCAANA alive and active for the last 4 years. Hope we have many more successful years ahead of us.

The Editorial Committee is honored to publish a very special article from Mrs. Nanda Leula about her life and times at Mahamaya, and we wish her the best.

Our next newsletter in December will be the last edition for this year, and the theme will be "Setting Goals and Targets" and "New Year Resolutions." Since all our members receive reminders about the theme and the due dates to submit the articles, we hope some of you will make the effort to write a few words for the next newsletter. Thanks for all your support!

Priyanka Jayakody (Editor for current issue)

Editorial committee– Priyanka Jayakody, Nazrana Caffoor, Dakshika Bandaranayake and Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa

Dhammapda....

"Who strives not when it is time to strive, who though young and strong is indolent, who is low in mind and thought and lazy, that idler never finds the way to wisdom."

## **A True Mahamayan.....**



**Our Oldest Old Girl, distinguished, beautiful and gracious Nanda Leula nee Pussegoda, who is 86 years young, talks about her life and times at Mahamaya.**

**Mrs. Nanda Leula nee Pussegoda is passionate about her roots. She writes about her life and times at Mahamaya in 1930s. Nanda came to USA in 1986 and she lives in Los Angeles surrounded by her two daughters and son, and their families. Nanda as our oldest old girl makes a positive influence on all of us. She and her family drove from Los Angeles to Las Vegas in 2007 to take part in our Annual General Meeting and the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Alms-giving. Nanda enthusiastically participated in Heel Dana at the Buddhist Vihara in commemoration of our founders. She enjoyed the camaraderie among the alumnae, no matter what the age differences were. As a true Mahamayan she continues to exemplify the values that she learned at school. We all enjoyed her spirit of friendship. Hope you will enjoy her story!!**

**Sujatha Werake**

# Nanda Leula nee Pussegoda: Story of Oldest Alumna in MGCAANA

I joined Mahamaya College in the year 1933. My parents lived in their ancestral village in Badulla, where they owned land. I had only one brother. I was brought to Ampitiya to attend Mahamaya.

Having moved from Badulla High School, I lived with my paternal uncle Pussegoda who worked as the Mudliyar at the Kandy Kachcheri at the time. His house was located at Ampitiya near the 2<sup>nd</sup> mile post. He and his wife, aunt Warakaulle had three girls, Mallika (Molly), Sujatha (Sally), and Biso Menika (Bessy). They would send their daughter Mallika Akka and I to Mahamaya in their car with a driver every morning and a boy was assigned to bring our lunch to school during our hour long interval at noon. The school started at 8:00 am and was over at 3:00 pm. I had my cousin Mallika (Mallika Pussegoda) for companionship.

My uncle wore a pair of tweed pants, a shirt, a tie, a tweed coat, and on top of his pants he neatly wrapped around a quality tweed cloth (Redda) of the same color. The bottom part of the pants was visible below the tweed cloth. His job as the Mudliyar (In the colonial times it was the job of a translator.) brought him a high social status in Kandy. In the Ampitiya area only my uncle and Magistrate Thalagodapitiya owned cars in 1930s. For the first time people were riding in private vehicles and that was a privilege of the elite.

I remember our principal Miss Bertha Rogers vividly. She was dignified, elegant, youthful and charming. She brought lot of changes to the school. During her time, she introduced Girl Guiding, the house system, sports, and drama. I learned Netball and our first netball court was built below the Main Building. I played in the "center" position. We practiced Netball in our half sarees. We played netball matches with the Kandy High School and it was a great success. I remember that I took part in the Needle-and-Thread Contest and won the first place.

Assembly in the morning:

The first thing in the morning was having the assembly in the upper floor of the Main Building. There was a small stage in the hall above the office between the two classes. We marched to the music while Mrs. Jonklass played the piano. We assembled in the small hall. The school day began with the recitation of Buddhist precepts. Miss Rogers would come up and wait until Miss Thambugala or Miss Weerasiri takes the lead in reciting Pancha Sila with the students. On Poya days, we observed "sil" in the Shrine Room. Ven. Narada of Vajirarama, Colombo came many times to conduct our "sil" programs.

We had less than two hundred students at the time. There were 5 Muslim girls (Ismail sisters whose family built the Kandy clock tower) attending Mahamaya at the time. I still can remember two of their names. They were Siththi, and Noorma. In the school there was only one toilet but no water available even for drinking. We had to run down to the boarding house to get some water. Our lunch hall was a shed with a thatched roof and walls made of wood planks.

In my fifth grade, my teacher was Mrs. Weerasekera who was a strict disciplinarian. She put on a school play called "Sakuntala." I was chosen for the main character "Sakuntala." Chandra Niyangoda, Wimala Talwatte, Ruby Ratwatte and Kusuma Jayasinghe, Kaity Ratwatte and few others were the rest of the cast. We practiced for quite a while and were looking forward to stage the play when I fell ill with Chicken Pox. Thus, Wimala Talwatte replaced me as Sakuntala and "Sakuntala" was staged without my participation. I remember another play that was organized by a teacher that had a street scene. I acted as a fish monger shouting "Dan genapu malu, isso, pokirisso, halmesso, koonisso!" Ruby Ratwatte acted as a Chinese woman carrying a bundle of fabric on her back. Some other students marched up and down the stage in their costumes and baskets on their heads, selling vegetables and fruits. It was quite fun for all of us. Miss Vantwest taught us country dancing which we performed at the end of the year concert.

We took part in art competitions and I won the first prize in one of those competitions. Art became a passion in my life and to this day I continue to paint portraits and landscapes without the use of eyeglasses.

Miss Rogers wanted to bring Mahamaya to the modern level of the Christian schools in Kandy, at the time, by adding extra curricular activities to the student life, such as sports, drama, and music.

The children were divided into four houses. They were Maya, Sanghamitta, Gothami and Prajapathi.

I still remember the teachers such as the head teacher, Miss Abeyratne. She was related to us and we called her "Punchi Akka." Miss Jonklass was my 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class teacher. I also remember Miss Seneviratne and Miss Hewawissa. Miss Seneviratne was also my class teacher later. Miss Rogers taught Arithmetic. Mrs. Weerasiri taught Buddhism. The matron Mrs. Gerty Silva taught us knitting, tatting and "Beeralu" (lace-making). We used to make booties, and bonnets. I still remember Mrs. Weerasekera taking us to see a black and white English movie. Miss Vantwest taught us Home Science, art, Netball and Girl Guiding. For Home Science practicals, she taught us how to make milk toffee, and jiggery toffee. We did our practicals in the hostel. One day she asked the class if anyone knew how to make the bed in the correct manner with two sheets. I raised my hand. I had seen making the bed at my cousin Sujatha's (Sally's) house by a hospital attendant who used to come and help my cousin and her husband Dr. Seneviratne with their domestic work. I made the bed in the correct manner. That day, I got the full marks for making the bed. End of the year, we ran sack-race, lime and spoon race, needle and thread race and other races. I had a nickname. My friend Kusuma Jayasinghe nicknamed me as "snowball" because of my skin color.

During the lunch interval we all flocked under the Veralu tree that had lot of fruits. We fought among ourselves to pick Veralu. It was located on the higher slope above the main building. We did not mind eating the unwashed Veralu that were on the ground. They were the tastiest of all.

I left Mahamaya in 1939, married a gentleman from Ampitiya, and had three daughters and one son. I recall my school days with much pleasure. I migrated to USA 25 years ago in 1983. I now live in Los Angeles, California with 3 of my children, and their families. I visit Sri Lanka every year to see my daughter and other relatives.

I am proud to be a Mayan, and a member of MGCAANA.

Contributed by Nanda Leula (nee Pussegoda)



Mrs. Leula in Las Vegas At the AGM  
Drawn By Mrs. Nanda leula



### Immigration –Is it the best way of life ?

As a person who never wanted to leave my homeland one would think that I will have more negatives than positive points for immigration.

The negative points are mainly centered on family or rather the lack of family when one migrates. And this is a significant negative to those with children. Children need their parents to show them unconditional love, and not having extended family could make children feel alone. And meeting grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins once in five years does not give children the time nor the comfort zone to form lasting bonds.

But then again there are some who view that extended family is a bad influence on children .They prefer not having family who will spoil their kids and encourage bad behavior. If one is of the second category, then immigration is one way to achieve it.

The positives of immigration certainly outweigh the negatives .Children get a good education and there is a wide scope of jobs available. And for those of us who are from Sri Lanka, we get the most important thing--peace. It is when you leave the country that you realize the difference of not having to worry about bombs in buses, trains etc. Our motherland is being destroyed from within, and it does not seem like there is anything anyone can do about it. From that perspective, immigration is another positive alternative for most of us.

But to say that immigration is the best way of life is like saying that the life before migrating was of no consequence, and if we had not got the chance to migrate our lives would have been less successful.

There are many in our homeland who are way more successful than those of us who have left seeking a better future. Our future is what we make of it ourselves. In my opinion it should not matter where you make it; rather, what matters is how hard you strive.

In conclusion, to answer the title question I would say that immigration has its many positive and negatives. It is up to each individual to decide how to pursue success by considering all the pros and cons. One person's success would not be another person's ideal goal in life. It is each person's aims and requirements that should determine if immigration is the best way for them.

Nazrana Caffoor.

### **One family, two cultures**

Almost twenty years ago, the chance of moving to America seemed like a passport to a beautiful future. When you are young and newly married to the love of your life, anything seems possible and migrating to the US as an expecting wife was definitely an adventure. My promise to my unborn child and the family I left behind was to raise my children with Sri Lankan traditions and values and not to make them fully “Americanized” in the years to come.

Today I admire and appreciate my two extraordinary daughters, and when I look back and asked how I raised them to be who they are today, gives me no straight answers. I am convinced that there were times they felt their parents did not understand them and felt like they were “from a different continent,” and of course they were. This feeling stemmed from the generation gap between us and it is perfectly normal whenever two cultures meet. I am sure many questions were left unanswered during my girls' adolescent years. Most of those questions were “why can't we do it when all my friends can?” The simple answer was “we are not from this country, that's not how we grow up, or it is not simply in our culture to do so.”

Once they visited this “other continent” and embraced Sri Lankan hospitality from close, distant relatives, and some total strangers, they began to admire a culture that is set in its own ways. Besides the people, the heritage and the history of the country were unfathomable to them; nevertheless, they continue to have a high regard for the country. Also, they have understood why parents are as protective of their offspring as they experienced the importance of being close to each other.

I am certain it is not true for all the immigrant families; for most of the teens that were born and raised in a Western culture, the cross culture dilemma is a daily reality as some parents have to struggle to maintain their relationships. Once your children understand your sensible expectations and the REASON for those viewpoints, they will choose a pathway to their own happiness and a future that is best for them no matter what part of earth's hemisphere we were born or raised in.

Even though I miss my dear Lanka, I am grateful for the country which gave my children a place to grow, explore and become good citizens which created a home sweet home far away from my motherland.

“America is not anything if it consists of each of us. It is something only if it consists of all of us”- Woodrow Wilson  
Sent By Priyanka Jayakody

### What I learned after migrating...

As a small girl, I had always wanted to travel abroad. Little did I know that when my dream came true I would not be ready for it. All I knew before I came to the U.S was that Americans spelled colour without a "u" and gray with an "e". But it turned out that my experiences living in the U.S. helped me grow as an individual. Personally, the most important lesson I learned in the US was to appreciate my Sri Lankan heritage, and my roots. I learned to understand why my parents, grandparents and teachers had raised me a certain way, and more than ever before I started to appreciate everything they had done for me.

Growing up, I had always listened to my parents and grandmothers asking me to dress and behave a certain way. I never dared to ask them why, and I never understood why my parents wanted me to wake up early every Sunday morning to go to the "Daham Paasala." I simply followed instructions, and did what I was *supposed* to do. Even during my teen years, I would never understand why they were always right, and I was always wrong. It seemed that I had to follow a thousand and one customs and traditions, and there was no way around them. Like a well trained puppy, I followed everything not really understanding why it was personally important to me. But now as I live on foreign soil, I have come to understand that each of those little things helped me become the person I am. Those are the values that are embedded deep within me, no matter how far away from mother Lanka I am.

Then, through my community college experience I learned how fortunate I had been to have studied at Mahamaya where we were taught so much more than science, social studies and math. I appreciate that our mother Maya had taught us how to respect elders, how to excuse ourselves if we were absent from school, how to talk to teachers and how to behave in the class room or at an assembly or in the bus. Of course, while I was in school I didn't always like all the advice. I didn't like that I had to put a knot at the end of my braid, or that my shoes had to be clean even if it were Friday! Now, years after leaving school and living abroad, I look at my life back home and my school years from a different perspective-- I am *more* appreciative of my parents and the strict teachers who made me do every single thing the virtuous way, being true to my Sinhalese traditions.

I always like to think that if my life were a tree, Sri Lanka has given me solid roots to stand tall and strong, and America has given me branches to reach up high. My life would have never been the same without each one of them...

Pamuditha Mahadiulwewa

### Great Land

It was quite confusing at the beginning...

Quirky accent, not so zesty food, of course the fast life...

Years went by.... raised two kids, finished school, found careers of our passion

And, here we are the citizens of the United States of America !!!

Kids are grown, following their own dreams, while harmonizing between the cultures of Lanka and the Americas

Yet, rising above the rest at times with courage and determination..

It is a beautiful life here in America to begin our days with greetings of Hello! Hola! Bonjour! And of course Ayubowan! Among our Lankan friends and many more...

Looking back at our yester years,

Yes...It was quite a journey..

There were moments to treasure... to let go... and special ones to hold on to in the years to come...

Thanks America !

Composed By Thishya Perera



## Pumpkin cupcakes!



### Theodore Roosevelt's ideas on Immigrants and being an AMERICAN in 1907.

"In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American, and nothing but an American... There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people."

Theodore Roosevelt 1907

### Editor's Book Nook.

Letters to My Daughter By Maya Angelou

The Last Lecture By Randy Pausch

The Secret By Rhonda Byrne

Eat, Pray, Love By Elizabeth Gilbert



**Yield:** 24 cupcakes

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, sift before measuring
  - 1 tablespoon baking powder
  - 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
  - 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
  - 1/2 cup butter, softened
  - 1 1/3 cups sugar
  - 2 eggs, beaten until frothy
  - 1 cup mashed cooked or canned pumpkin
  - 3/4 cup milk
- 3/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)

### **Directions:**

- 1) Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg into a bowl. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy; beat in eggs. Blend in mashed pumpkin.
- 2) Stir in the sifted dry ingredients alternately with the milk, blending until batter is smooth after each addition; stir in chopped walnuts or pecans. Spoon batter into well-greased and floured or paper-lined muffin pan cups. Fill about 2/3 full.
- 3) Bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes, or until a wooden pick or cake tester inserted in center comes out clean. Frost with cream cheese frosting.

(Source: <http://cookies-n-cakes.com/>)

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