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# Maya Puwath

Bimonthly Newsletter from MGCAANA



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*MGCAANA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE ON MAY SATURDAY, 28TH IN MARYLAND.*

*MORE INFORMATION ON PAGE 3 & 5*

“There is no fire like lust.  
There is no grip like anger.  
There is no net like delusion.  
There is no river like craving.

– Dhammapada- (The way of Truth)

- Translated by Sangharaksitha



It is with great pleasure that I am writing this editorial for the April issue of Mayapuwath. April month is very special of all Sri Lankans. We celebrate Sinhala and Tamil New Year on April 13th and 14th in Sri Lanka. On Behalf of MGCAANA, I wish you all a very Happy New Year and may you all be blessed with happiness and with good health!

April is also a month where Mayans in North America are getting busy with organizing our next Annual General Meeting. This year our Mayans in and around Maryland have already begun their work to host the event. We admire the work they have been already doing. Maryland is a location that can be more attractive to visiting Mayans and their families who will participate in our AGM and Dinner Dance. There are numerous historic sites and monuments, memorials, and famous galleries, and government buildings and landmarks in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia, that millions of visitors from all over the world come to see. I invite all my fellow Mayans and their families all over the United States and Canada to take the opportunity to unite with Mayans as well as seeing these great places with historic value.

We salute our Alma Mater for giving us wings to fly and showing us how to soar high. We can fly as far as we can go, as long as we are strong. Away from home, one way to energize ourselves is to be together as Mayans and helping one another when a little push is needed. Let us work together and stay strong.

**One more question:** Did you renew your membership for the year 2015/2016? Do you know any Mayan who wants to join MGCAANA? You will find every reason to be a member when you visit our web site MGCAANA <http://www.mahamayaalumnina.org>

**I am excited and looking forward to see you all in Maryland on Saturday the May 28<sup>th</sup>.**

For further information on the AGM and the Dinner Dance, please visit our web site and also check Maya Puwath.

Editorial by Sriyani Dissanayake

*Wishing you all a very happy and a prosperous  
Sinhala and Hindu New Year!*





**MAHAMAYA GIRLS' COLLEGE ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION  
OF NORTH AMERICA (MGCAANA)**

*Cordially invites you to the*

**12TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER DANCE  
In Maryland, U.S.A.**



**Date:** Saturday, May 28, 2016

**Time:** AGM - 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Dinner Dance :** 7:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.

**Address:** New Fortune Chinese Seafood Restaurant,  
Walnut Hill Shopping Center  
16515 South Frederick Ave:  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

**Phone:** (301) 548-8886

**THERE WILL BE A SILENT AUCTION AT THE GATHERING TO RAISE  
FUNDS FOR THE VIDYA SCHOLARSHIP TRUST FUND.**

**RSVP by May 1, 2016 to [mahamaya\\_alumnae@yahoo.com](mailto:mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com)**

For more information, please contact:

Upamali (240) 413-5500; Nelum: (443) 614-0468; Tamara (240) 499-4015; Inoka (443) 546-3419;

Please visit our MGCAANA web page for more information

<http://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/AGM12Info.html>

## SILENT AUCTION

Dear Mayans,

We are planning to have a silent auction at the AGM to raise funds for Vidhya Scholarship Trust Fund. For this we decided to collect the following items:

- 1.Needle work (cross stitch designs, embroidery)
- 2.Crochet work (small table runners, doilies etc)
- 3.Note cards, greeting cards (could be handmade for rustic look)
- 4.Costume jewelry (necklaces, earrings, bracelets etc.)
- 5.Small paintings
- 6.Christmas/seasonal decorations (tree ornaments, stockings, table decorations etc.)
- 7.Pot holders, tea cozy etc.
- 8.Table mats, Table linen such as napkins
- 9.Chocolates/candy/novelty cookies etc.
- 10.Any other small items you can donate
- 11.Volunteer to do a service for a fee. Example: A flower arrangement for \$XX.00. If you are good at this you can say I'll do a flower arrangement for \$XX.00. But you'll have to have an example picture of the item being donated- otherwise it may not sell.

If you have anything to donate to this worthy course please contact Indrani Gunawardana through our MGCAANA email: [mahamaya\\_alumnae@yahoo.com](mailto:mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com)  
The items must be in good condition and the donor should set the price for their donated items.

**YOU CAN NOW ORDER GREETINGS CARDS 10 PACK OR MORE THROUGH MGCAANA EMAIL ADDRESS.**

[mahamaya\\_alumnae@yahoo.com](mailto:mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com)

ALL PROCEEDINGS WILL GO TO THE VSTF TO HELP ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGE CHILDREN AT MAHAMAYA.



Simple Fun during the New Year Time in SriLanka.



**A model of a Ferris Wheel at the New Year Celebrations. Created by the University of Peradeniya**

# Mayan's Community Announcements

## **APPRECIATION**

Mrs. Kumari Ehelepola

MGCAANA's deepest condolences to our dear alumnae, Dr. Ranjani Siriwardane and her family, and, Mrs. Sujatha Meethalawa and her family on the passing of their beloved mother Mrs. Kumari Ehelepola. Mrs. Ehelepola served as a teacher in Matale and Kandy districts. She knew the value of education. Mrs. Ehelepola and Mr. Wijesundera gave the best education possible to both their children, and in turn, Sujatha and Ranjani fulfilled their parents' aspirations.

Sujatha and Ranjani were students under the leadership of our visionary principal, Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena and received a well-rounded education. Both sisters has been keen sponsors of MGCAANA's projects at Mahamaya for many years, regarding economically disadvantaged students. Ranjani has been a strong MGCAANA supporter since its beginning and she along with her husband attends our Annual General Meetings most often.

Ranjani, Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry, works as a research scientist for the National Energy Technology Laboratory(NETL). She has immensely contributed in her fields of physical chemistry, chemical engineering and applied chemistry. She is an inventor, who has many patents, won many prestigious awards, and has over 100 publications. Ranjani lives in Morgantown, West Virginia with her husband Professor Siriwardane.

Sujatha following her mother's carrier, became a teacher and taught at Pushpadana Vidyalaya for many years. After retirement, she teaches at an international school at present. She lives at Dangolla, Kandy with her husband.

Dear Sujatha and Ranjani, May love and care of those around you provide comfort and peace to get through this difficult time. May she attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana!

Sujatha Werake



## Memories of my Mother



By Ranjani Siriwardane

I would like to thank Mrs. Sujatha Werake and Mrs. Sriyani Dissanayake for asking me to write an article about my mother who passed away on March 11, 2016. It was very hard to say good bye to somebody who loved me so much and truly cared for me.

My mother, Kumari Ehelepola, was born in 1926 in the Ehelepola village near Matale. Education for women was not a priority at that time and my grandfather asked her to stay home after completing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. My mother with her strong personality somehow convinced my grandfather that she needed to go to school. She continued her studies and became a school teacher. Education was a big part of her life and she always emphasized that it is important for girls to get a good education and to have good careers. She was a school teacher and worked in the Kandy area at the beginning of her career but moved to Matale and taught at BMS College until she retired.

I received my elementary education at Hill Wood College and my mother wanted me to transfer to Mahamaya College in sixth grade since Mahamaya was gaining a high reputation for sending students to the University. She also respected Mrs. Gunawardane, the school principal at that time. She emphasized the importance of after school homework and studying at home. During school holidays she got us to read and do other work to improve our English which I did not appreciate at the time, but I value it very much now.

My mother was a very protective parent and some of the things she did were embarrassing at times, but it was because she cared. She insisted and accompanied me to the first day of student registration at the science department at Peradeniya University because “ragging” was a big concern for her. It was embarrassing when I realized that I was the only one with both parents and my seniors ordered me to worship my parents near the registration desk to show my gratitude for accompanying me.

She had a strong influence on me and was able to convince me to get her permission before making any major decisions in my life. When my husband whom I met at the University first asked me out I told him that he had to meet my mother before I make my decision. He reluctantly came to my house to meet my mother before I agreed to go out with him.

She had two children but my cousins who lived in remote areas stayed with us to go to school because their parents were comfortable leaving them under the guidance of my mother. She considered them her own children and most of them were able to get a University education. They were very thankful to her for guiding them to have a better life. After retirement she devoted her life to do religious activities and was a strong member of the Subodharama meditation center in Kandy.

I love my mother and miss her very much. May the blessings of triple gem always be with her!

## Appreciation

Mrs. Malini Weliwita Senanayake

One of our alumnae, Malini Weliwita Senanayake passed away an year ago, on April 16, 2015 in California, at the age of 81. She was a wonderful human being. She lived in Los Angeles with her husband of 58 years, Mr. Senanayake and two daughters, Priyanka and Champika, and their families. Her three daughters, Champika Senanayake Leula, Priyanthi Senanayake Dissanayake (who lives in Australia) and Deepika Senanayake Weerakoon are Mayans as well.

She taught middle school and high school in Sri Lanka as an English trained teacher for many years in the Kandy District. After retirement, she joined the English Language Teaching Unit of University of Peradeniya, as an English Instructor for undergraduates. Malini was a strong, practicing Buddhist who was the eighth generation descendent of most Venerable Weliwita Sangharaja Mahanayake Thero of Malwatte Chapter, Kandy. She engaged in Buddhist activities from a very young age. As an adult she was an active member of Buddhist societies and meditation groups. She taught Buddhist values to her students, and to her own children and grandchildren.

Malini participated in MGCAANA's Annual General Meeting in Las Vegas in 2006 with her two daughters and their families during Dharshani Nanayakkara's presidency.

Although we learned about her demise much later, we the Maya family would like to send our most sincere condolences to the Senanayake family at this difficult time.

May she attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana!

Written by Sujatha Werake



**Picture of our Malini when she was attending Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy**



## How men defraud women in Sri Lanka.

By Lokubanda Tillakaratne

I missed by a hair to write something about the International Women's Day. In the greater scheme of things, it is not a surprise. We men in Sri Lanka always find a way to overlook to celebrate everything about women. Therefore, I am writing this to make up for my failure. After reading the following, I am certain I will not get a seat in any OBA association soiree. But I am certain this has the potential to be loved by all OGA gatherings. Everything discussed herein are true to the best of my knowledge, and factually proven. To make the chronology simpler, all these events happened on November 20th, my birthday, which is on everyone's calendar.

Checked history of men is full of stories about how they have been defrauding women in all corners of the world. This is tormenting to think about, and has reached a shameful level.

Let me start with Vijaya, the mythical and itinerant prince from the Eastern seaboard of India who sailed aimlessly and stumbled upon a sand bar near Mannar in North West Sri Lanka. Even before he stepped out of the terminal, he started duping Kuweni, the first woman he met at a duty free shop on the quayside. As this man and his band of drifters dragged ashore laden with Ghiradelli chocolate and Jack Daniels, without a country I might add, the kind woman gave them food and clothes against the advice of her kin and the elders. Within months Vijaya married Kuweni and had two children with her. As she got older, the man dropped Kuweni without an iota of explanation and sent for an Indian princess to marry. Rest is history somewhere in the Bintenna area. That's where anthropologist Seligmann, with his wife by his side, of course, found the relatives of Kuweni and wrote about them. Until then, no other Sri Lankan male writer had the time to write about Kuweni's people. At most, smidgen we find written about them didn't go beyond being footnotes in the erudite history treatises by none other than male Sri Lankans. Ironically though, after he found Kuweni's clan, Mr. Seligman couldn't write about them alone - Mrs. Seligman was right there to co-author the *numero uno* disquisition on the subject, ***Veddahs of Ceylon (1911)***.

Sri Maha Bodhi was brought to Sri Lanka by a woman. She also introduced Meheni Asna. Daladawa (Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha) was brought by a woman. But these two women have become only footnotes on page 20 in the Sri Lanka's history annals.

Theri Sangamitta, sister of Arahat Mahinda brought the famed sapling that grew to be The Sri Maha Bodhi. Although she initiated the Meheni Asna with Anula Devi, the kings who as a rule were men, didn't do much to give any traction of the concept. Yet the sad irony is that the tree that was brought by a woman is out of bound to women. This is not written in jest, but these days, only select men with inside track are allowed to climb up the Ran Weta (Golden Fence) on the upper plaza where the tree is and touch it and make wishes to make the 20-hour flight to Thawtisawa heaven, quite possibly alone, leaving the woman behind on the lower plaza. I bet when the arborists from Gannoruwa National Farm come to take care of the tree; only a male technician will go up to the upper plaza to examine the tree up close while the female arborist shouts him advise from the mezzanine plaza. How fitting that Nanda Malini, Queen of Sri Lankan singers sings the classic ***Panam Pattuwe Dingiri Ammaya!***

Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy is the most precious and holiest item to Buddhists in Sri Lanka. It was brought here in the 4th century by none other than a woman. Hemamala hid it in the knot of her hair all the way from Northern India. While the precious and holy relic shined her way, her man, ludicrously impersonating with the name Dantha (in Sanskrit - teeth) slept the nights away floating in dreams of applause for being part of the team. Hemamala stayed awake for fear of thuggies (highway robbers in ancient India) at her heels. But story gets funnier after Hemamala carefully delivered the precious relic to the Sri Lankan king Sirimeghavanna (362-409 c.e) on November 20th, I believe. Exegesis of Kings' work in Sri Lankan history sheds light to abundant occasions when women were not considered worthy of holding (any) office. Continuing this dubious tradition, the modern versions of our law won't allow women or make them eligible to vote at the selection of the Diyawadana Nilame, the man who is charged with looking after the Tooth Relic at the Dalada Maligawa. In the voting roll of 397 dignitaries are Chief monks, Divisional Secretaries (DROs) and AGA's of the island. Among them are many brilliant ladies. These ladies are excluded from voting! It seems like while every law seem to have been rewritten multiple times by men, this law had never been found to be out of step with common sense. This is in a country where men make the majority of the Constitutional Assembly which changes the Constitution of the country in one sitting. Adding insult to the injury, the very man whose selection process is barred to women is being protected by a eclectic group of men folks when he was to be interviewed by the CID recently for alleged improprieties in the guise of protecting the Tooth Relic which wouldn't be his charge in the first place had not Hemamala braved the thuggies along the way to deliver it here. Need I say what would happen if some brave woman submits an application to become the Diyawadana Nilame? Men will go to war -against women.

King Dutugamunu just couldn't come alone to Anuradhapura. He needed the advice of his mother, Vihara Mada Devi to win wars (ref. Mahawansa). But all the credit is written illuminating him, although she was with him every step of the way. On her own merits, she was one tough lady. Before she became a queen or a mother, some men who lost their heads tied her to a wooden raft and tossed it in to the sea from Kelaniya, less than 20 miles north of Colombo. After landing at Kirinde near Tissamaharama she immediately set out to work on an empire. While going to Anuradhapura with her son, she did some pretty good war scheming ('*manthaudena*,' footnote in Mahawansa) to defeat the Tamil general near Mahaelagamuwa before coming to Kasagama hill near Mihintale to proceed for the last battle with Elara. This is not a made up story. It is all in black and white in the Sri Lankan Chronicle, written by, a man.

Sri Lanka, had centuries old tradition of aristocracy but never had a women aristocrat! There were hundreds of Mudliyors, Dissaves, and Korales during the last few centuries. For nearly 400 years when the aristocracy existed, the powers that be selecting the aristocrats wanted us to believe that there was no woman fit enough to be embellished as one of the Mudaliyors or Dissawes. Showing their infinite magnanimity, however, women I talked to about this (at the 20th anniversary dinner at Mahamaya USA OGA meeting), they seemed to care less. Only plausible explanation, perhaps correctly so, is women were never going to be obsequious to get titles from an invader in the guise of an old man-lord, a Greatly Venerated and Highly Empowered Sir (Governor). Men, on the other hand, did anything to get a pin stuck on their lapel and didn't care who it was from. Look no further than the daily musical chair event that takes place in the Sri Lankan politics to get a name tag as a politician. Women knew Mudliarhood, Dissawehood or Koralehood are wishy-washy in comparison to Motherhood. So they scoffed the men in silence. Later in British times, all-powerful Governadoru Uthumanan Wahanse too failed to recognize the woman of the house when he participated in the medieval rituals of embellishing a man as the member of the aristocracy. The event probably was marked as "Luncheon" on November 20th in his calendar. And as the nascent aristocrat rode home after getting the title, his oversized finery, to say nothing of the gold color tapestry, helped him hold his inflated hubris. Every four mile he passed, and nothing else to do in the buggy, he added a new name to his praenomen. By the time he came home, his name became four full lines long, and looked like a 20-word job description on the Labor Department bulletin board. It consisted of names of co-op societies, ascetics, highway robbers, retired governors, gunsmiths, elephant trappers, palace guards, and a hotel in London. These names are so long, genealogy networks freeze unable to accommodate the full name.

Even as recently as in the late 19th century, C.F. Gordon Cummings found that only 4% of women in Kandy were able to sign the marriage register. In 1883, 5/6th of girls grew up without an education in Sri Lanka. In those days too, men folks grew up seeing and hearing how women were second tier citizens in their own families. One exception though is that when Hume writing to J. Taylor in Matura (Matara) in late 19th century, he was concerned that high class Donnas of Matura were not getting proper education. While gentlemanly he brought up the issue, he also let it be known that his fellow men were allowing only themselves to be fattened with the perks of education while women were left without the opportunity. In the early 20th century too, my mother and grandmother lived without ever having stepped into a class room, because on those days, too, the quirky cultural norms denied girls the opportunity to go to school. In any matter of official business, it was sufficient they place their thumb print on the document. According to Center for Women's Research, however, in 1946 only 53% of the girls aged 10-14 were literate.

Here are two examples to the universality of this defrauding. Writing in his *Broad Stone of Honor or Rules for the Gentlemen of England (1822)* Kenelm Henry Digby sided with the God against women. He wrote that all men are equal before God. The truth of the matter is that Digby and his fellow men thought to hell with women. These men were just as fraudulent and didn't know women were all around them all the time. His own woman must have been probably making dinner while Digby created his epistolary masterpiece. Even the U.S. which is now broiled in Presidential Pre-election drama, routinely lectures nations at every forum about the value of democracy. But their own women have voiced for right to vote as early as 1840 and only nearly 100 years later their vote was counted.

Recently, the Parliament with its zillion cabinet positions and enriched with its infinite wisdom, created a Women's Affairs Ministry - like women don't know how to take care of their business! If you check the Ministry website, there is not a single word for Women's health, but under Service is Police and Lawyers. According to the Ministry what women need more is police and lawyers for protection - not from the kids at home I suppose. And the men members of the Assembly don't have a Ministry for men's affairs making it easy for them to behave like kindergartners without any impediment wherever they met. When they do, their linguistic formatting is off the chart; mothers turn the TV volume down, if the kids are watching.

Lighting of the lamp on ceremonial occasions is quite a cultural spectacle anywhere Sri Lakans gather. Rarely a woman gets the first opportunity or any opportunity at all to light the ceremonial brass lamp in these events. During New Year celebrations, musical gala events, and meetings and so on, but nearly always, a traditionally dressed teenage girl will hold the candle which men use to light the lamp. Then they go and stand morosely on a line facing the audience waiting for the applause. We don't know what they see in us in the audience. But the closest thing the audience sees is a bunch of guys, *flagrante delicto*, in a police line-up.

Even in the rural corners of the country, during the golden age of the *kamath* customs in the paddy field, I am remorseful now to recall that we kept the woman of the house out of the threshing floor when she brought breakfast.

And just a few years ago, when a woman became the first Chief Justice, men lined up to dismiss her without giving her the benefit of due course of justice. Then the male Presidency went to work right off the bat: it selected a man for the job on the 20th day of the month! The first woman Prime Minister of the world, a Sri Lankan woman, was ridiculed by a man Head of State in our country when he denied her civil rights for breaches which are commonplace in the polity of today.

And finally, I can't find a simple enough way to describe how preposterous for a man to thump his chest and call himself better than a woman. Consider this. Being the husband, you let the mother of your children go for an outing one day. Then when it is time to feed the kids, you have no clue where to start. You begin to run like a blinded donkey with the tail on fire. You are sweating and suddenly find you don't know how to feed the children. You grab the phone and press the speed dial for Mother. "Where is the *lunu polkatta?*" You ask her panicked.

Writer's work includes *Pulse of the Jungle, Echoes of the Millstone, Montaray Vitthi and Gammedde Ninnadaya.*

## Founding members of this great Buddhist Girls' College in Kandy in 1932



*This photograph has been taken out of our own publication of "A Guiding Light."*

*By Sriyani Dissanayake*

# Sri Lankan Traditional Recipes

## Konda Kewum (Oil Cake)

### Ingredients:

1 cup American Flour  
1 cup White Rice Flour  
2 pods Cardamoms  
Pinch of Salt  
Kithul or Coconut Treacle  
Oil for deep frying

### Method:

Mix the two kinds of flour together with ground cardamom and salt.  
Mix it with honey until it forms a thick liquid.  
To check for consistency, take a spoonful of the batter and drop it slowly back to the mixture. The batter should form pleats if the consistency is correct.  
Heat about a cup of oil thoroughly in a thachhi.  
Drop a small amount (about 1/4 cup) of batter to the center of the thachhi to make a Kawum.  
Use a wooden stick and poke center of kewum. Use a slotted spoon to pour oil over the kawum and form a konde with oozed out batter.  
Fry until it turns golden brown.  
Drain the kewum onto paper and serve.

## Kokis

### Ingredients:

1 Egg  
250 g Rice flour  
1/2 ts Turmeric  
1/4 ts Salt  
1 Litre oil

### Method:

Beat the egg. Sieve flour into a bowl and add the egg, turmeric, salt and sufficient coconut milk to make a thick batter. Heat the oil and when bubbling hold the kokis mould in the oil until the mould is hot. Carefully dip the mould into the batter, taking care not to submerge it completely.

Remove from the batter and place in the hot oil where the batter should separate from the mould but still retain its shape as it deep fries.

If the batter sticks it may need to be eased from the mould with a wooden toothpick. Repeat the process until all the batter is used.



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

Newsletter Committee:  
Sriyani Dissanayake and Vajeera Dorabawila.