



75th ANNIVERSARY VOLUME

MAYA PUWATH

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Knowledge is supreme - The Buddha

EDITORIAL

75 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE: CELEBRATING THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Hello Everyone,

Once again we are at the beginning of a new year. The past year has been a very successful & progressive year for the MGCAANA. A new Board of Directors were elected ,who have continued the good work with great enthusiasm . This we perceive as a very good sign for the future of our organization. The ability to work for the betterment of the organization is no doubt an admirable quality & I must say we have seen this very well displayed in our new Board of Directors.

The year 2007 is one of great import to all Mayans. Our Alma mater will be celebrating its 75th anniversary . This is a momentous milestone for this institution. This school originated as a result of a handful of strong willed women in an age when education in the vernacular was considered unfashionable. Under the British rule , there was little or no help from the government for this kind of venture. Under these adverse maybe terribly daunting circumstances these women would have fought hard for the starting of **M a h a m a y a C o l l e g e** . Today the caliber & standard of this school is indeed a tribute to all the headmistress, teachers & all those who took an interest in the schools well being all through the past years. We have to be grateful to those dedicated few who gave unselfishly to make this school one of the best schools in Sri Lanka. And we the beneficiaries must remember the long & hard struggle all the patrons of Mahamaya collage have been through and make sure we continue & enlighten the future generations to understand & appreciate the origins of this **strd**. We are honored & grateful to be part of such an elite school .

The MGCAANA will be publishing a commemorative volume to mark this **m e m o r a b l e e v e n t** . This volume will hold memoirs of past pupils & teachers. It will be a great souvenir for all Mayans.

The New year is a time to start new projects. And in the year 2007 we would like to take the MGCAANA newsletter a step forward. With this in mind we are adding a new segment to reach more Mayans & to encourage them to be a part of the Newsletter. Reaching out to all Mayans living all around the American continent is one of the most important activity of the MGCAANA. Details of this new segment is in the newsletter. Hope we will get your support in this endeavor.

We wish all our readers a Happy & Prosperous New Year!

Nazrana Caffoor-Editor

The beauty of anniversaries is that they give us the opportunity to look back and see how far we have come. In only three-quarters of a century, Mahamaya Girls' College has evolved from the *Halmita Iskole* (the school built with a fistful of rice) into a distinguished, comprehensive institution ranked today among the leading national schools in Sri Lanka. In January 2007, Mahamaya College will be celebrating 75 years of excellence in many areas: academics, fine arts, sports, extra-curricular activities, exceptional faculty and Buddhist values. The brilliant curriculum and education structure at Mahamaya made us strong, resilient and goal oriented.

Moreover the school's unique culture is worth preserving. The firm rules taught us discipline and respect. Every student of Mahamaya is assured not only educational success but also personal development; perseverance, compassion, cooperation and politesse are instilled in students. The faculty, students and alumnae of Mahamaya form a consortium of committed individuals who, while diverse, strive with unity of purpose for excellence in learning and serving our society. All the individuals associated with this remarkable institution – principals, teachers, clerical and custodial staff, students, and alumnae – have been fundamental to the advancement of the school over the years. As we commemorate the 75th anniversary it is our hope that Mahamaya Girls' College will continue to shine and that the present and future students will be able to carry the legacy and become contributing citizens of whom we can speak proudly.

Dharshani Nanayakkara- President

There is no fire like passion, No chain like guilt No snare like infatuation, No torrent like craving - Dhammapada #251. Submitted by **Sujatha Werake**

"Always do right. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest." --Mark Twain Submitted by **Sujatha Werake**

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Nazrana Caffoor (Editor in Charge of current Volume), Priyanka Jayakody, Dr. Devi Gunasekera and Chathuri Nugawela-Munasinghe.

A Celebration of History: 75th Anniversary of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, 1932-2007

Looking Back at Founding of Mahamaya: Some Important Antecedents 1932-2007

On January 14th 1932 Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy was founded by an association of middle class Buddhist women, the Sadachara Bauddha Kulangana Samitiya. This was an era that Buddhist education suffered a severe setback because of colonial and Christian missionary education. And this was also a time that the traditional society did not recognize the need of formal education for women. At the time, Ven. Bhikku Karandana Attadassi (1868-1938) who resided at Dhammayukthikaramaya in Katukele, Kandy worked hard in the Buddhist revival movement in the Kandy district. He felt the urgency in establishing a school for Buddhist girls in Kandy when he saw the great influence of Christian missionaries on the lives of Buddhists in Kandyan areas. Methodist Missionary Society opened Girls' High School in 1879. Hillwood College was founded in 1890 by Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. In 1899 Kandy Good Shepherd Convent was opened by Catholic Missionaries.

When the two dayakas of Dhammayukthikaramaya, Sarah and Bennet Soysa lost their four year old only child Chula who suffered from typhoid fever, the abbot Ven. Attadassi persuaded the grief-stricken parents to establish a Buddhist English school for the girls in Kandy. On March 16, 1924, Sarah Soysa with Ven. Bhikkhu Karandana Atthadassi, Chitravo Katugaha Ratwatte, Henrietta Atukorale, Emmie Jayatillake, and Isobelle Wijegunawardene met at the temple and established the Sadachara Bauddha Kulangana Samitiya. Chitravo Ratwatte was appointed as the President and Kuda Ratwatte was invited to be the Chief Patron. Sarah Caroline Soysa was chosen as Secretary. Henrietta Atukorale was appointed as the treasurer

and Emmie Jayatillake and Isobelle Wijegunawardene were made Vice-Presidents. The Kulangana Samithiya was faced with a big challenge from the Christian Missionary schools that provided English education and Western culture to the daughters of affluent families. Sarah Soysa worked hard with a strong determination and courage to pursue their dream. Kulangana Samithiya collected money by lotteries, fairs, sales of pots of rice, flower stalls at the Dalada Maligawa, and donations. By July 3, 1926 they had collected Rs. 17, 704.28. On March 30, 1928 the Kulangana Samithiya celebrated the fourth anniversary of the society by laying the foundation stone at Mawilmada, Kandy for the Buddhist Girls' School. The British Governor of Ceylon, Sir Herbert Stanley ceremonially laid the foundation stone. Later the members of the Kulangana Samithiya decided that Mawilmada was not a suitable place because it was too far from the Kandy city.

West Cliffe House:

On February 22, 1930, the Kulangana Samithiya decided to buy the West Cliffe House and two acres of land that belonged to Anagarika Dharmapala with two and a half acres of adjoining land that belonged to Arthur Fernando. The West Cliffe House was situated to the west side of the Kandy Lake by the Lotus Pond. Anagarika Dharmapala had bought West Cliffe House and established a samanera training center in the premises and he lived there with the students. (The room where he lived has a commemorative plaque "IN MEMORY OF THE LATE VENERABLE ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA IN RECOGNITION OF HIS GREAT HELP TO THE WELFARE OF THIS INSTITUTION.") With so much difficulty the Kulangana Samithiya, purchased the West Cliffe House with two acres for Rs.35,000. Initially Rs.20,000 was paid and the remaining Rs.15,000 was paid over a period of three years. Adjoining

land that stretched up to Mahamaya Mawatha (earlier known as Hermitage Road) was bought from Proctor Arthur Fernando for Rs.22,000.

Kulangana Samithiya held its first meeting at West Cliffe House on November 30, 1930. It was decided to build a two-storeyed building above West Cliffe House for classrooms. On October 21, 1931 the work on the two-storeyed building was started.

The Buddhist Girls' School opens:

Kulangana Samithiya decided to open the school at West Cliffe House at the beginning of the school year in 1932 without waiting for the new building. On January 14, 1932 amidst the chanting of Pirith by the Mayanayakas of Malwatte and Asgiriya temples and Bhikku Karandana Atthadassi and the Bhikkhus of Dhammayukthikaramaya, Leuke Ratwatte Kumarihamy cut the ribbon at the auspicious time of 10.25 am. Her grand daughter, five-year-old Amara Ratwatte was enrolled as the first student. Hilda Westbrooke Kularatne, wife of P de S. Kularatne became the first principal. The first day 16 girls were admitted to the school. Ten students and three teachers were admitted to the school boarding which was a part of West Cliffe House. Eva de Mel, Karunawathie Gunaratne, Seelawathie Thambugala and two pupil teachers were hired as the staff. The Principal and her family were given accommodation in another section of the West Cliffe House.

The West Cliffe House is none other than the majestic old hostel. At present it is preserved as the Archives of Mahamaya.

Reference: With a Fistful of Rice: Buddhist Women and the Making of Mahamaya Girls' College by Indrani Meegama, 2003.

Submitted by Sujatha Werake

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT – MS. DHARSHANI NANAYAKKARA

Another year comes to an end, and what a great year it was. Between receiving the non-profit status, gifting four computers to Mahamaya, establishing the Host and Travel Club, raising funds by means of a car wash and a raffle, organizing the Second Annual General Meeting, donating money to Katrina victims and to the JEENA Foundation, publishing six issues of *Maya Puwath*, increasing our membership count, providing two undergraduate scholarships, and sponsoring seventeen disadvantaged students at Mahamaya, it's amazing how many memories we can squeeze into one year. The New Year starts, and we will do it all over again.

Without our passionate and dedicated Board of Directors (Neranjika Dissanayake, Tamara Jayasundera, Kishani Martin, Dharshani Nanayakkara, Harshi Waters, and Mrs. Sujatha Werake) and the Executive Committee (Erandi Ranaweera), we truly couldn't have reached this far. I am profoundly grateful for all your support and unconditional love. In this vast continent, our website, maintained by Neranjika Dissanayake, and our newsletter, *Maya Puwath*, have helped us stay connected. I owe a debt of deep gratitude to the editors of *Maya Puwath*, Nazrana Caffoor, Devi Gunasekera, Priyanka Jayakody, and Chathuri Nugawela-Munasinghe for making us feel proud to be a part of this organization.

Neranjika Dissanayake, Nilmini Dorabawila, Vajeera Dorabawila, and Arushie Nugapitiya, your efforts in establishing the Host and Travel Club are much appreciated. We were able to raise a significant amount of funds because of all the hard work put forth by Sumana Kiridena, Nadeeka Ranasinghe (Chairperson), and Mrs. Sujatha Werake (Fundraising Committee 2005-2006) and all the members who enthusiastically bought and sold the raffle tickets – thank you very much. Members of the 2006-2007 Fundraising Committee (Mrs. Eloma Hettiarachchi, Chairperson Tamara Jayasundera, Kishani Martin, Thanujee Navaratne, and Inoka Tennakoon) are an asset to MGCAANA for this year's fundraising activities that are to be organized.

Thanks to the members of the Scholarship Committee (Vajeera Dorabawila, Dharshani Nanayakkara, and Arushie Nugapitiya), we were able to initiate the Undergraduate and Graduate Scholarship Program and award two scholarships in the Fall 2006 semester. The Sponsorship Program is a great success – through our generous sponsors, we have provided financial assistance to no less than seventeen students of Mahamaya so far. Thank you Mrs. Sujatha Werake for diligently handling the responsibilities of this project. All the members in Maryland who organized the Second Annual General Meeting, and Chathuri Nugawela Munasinghe and Dr. Jeeva Munasinghe, who host the dinner, I cannot thank you enough for your hospitality.

I applaud our in-house-attorney, Harshi Waters, for her efforts in making MGCAANA a non-profit organization – thank you for always guiding us on legal matters. As a part of the Mahamaya Girls' College 75th anniversary celebrations, we will be publishing a Commemorative Volume. I sincerely thank all the members of the Publication Committee (Piyeshni Arambepola, Sriyani Dissanayake, Nilmini Dorabawila, Vajeera Dorabawila, Kishani Martin, Kanchanakeshi Warnapala, and Mrs. Sujatha Werake) for working extremely hard to achieve this goal.

Most importantly, I would like to thank all the members of MGCAANA. Dear member, you are the backbone of this organization, and you are our inspiration. Together, we have accomplished a lot, and I am certain that you will continue to support us in our future endeavors. We have grown to a membership of more than 65 within a short period of 1½ years. At this point, it would be only appropriate to commend the efforts of our Membership Committee; also, the Mahamaya Old Girls' Association Colombo Branch supported us in our search for Mayans residing in the U.S. and Canada.

I am honored to be serving as President in the year 2006-2007, and thank you very much for bestowing your trust upon me. To me, all of you are equally important; hence, if I have missed any names, please forgive me. MGCAANA has made such a difference in my life; I will forever cherish this experience. Let us all continue to serve our Alma Mater, fellow alumnae, and society with high spirits in the year ahead. May the New Year be filled with happy and wonderful moments for you to treasure.

With best wishes,

Dharshani Nanayakkara

NEW SEGMENT FOR THE YEAR 2007.

This is a segment we are introducing keeping you, our readers in mind. We would like to hear from all our members & honorary members. For this segment we want you to send us an introduction of you & your family (not exceeding 250 words) with a photograph attached. (optional) We will include one or two such articles as per availability of space. And the articles will appear according to the manner we receive them. It will be on a first come first basis & those we can not include in one newsletter will appear in the next. Hence there will be no favoritism nor will any be left out. And once you send in your articles it will be the property of MGCAANA. Changes to the write ups you send in will only take place if we, the editorial committee, think it is required. If for example they exceed the word limit or if they require grammar correction. All changes that are done (if they are required) will be sent back to you before it appears in the newsletter.

We hope that we hear from all our readers. This way we can give the MGCAANA newsletter a more personal approach. - [THE NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE](#)