36



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The Kelaniya Peliyagoda Vidyalankara Pirivena celebrated 140 years as one of the leading Theravada Buddhist Monastic schools in the world and also as the center

This special article was based on the interview with Venerable Welamitiyawe Sri Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thero, done by the author of this column/article on the 14th of December 2015 at the Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kelaniya. Photos : courtesy of Vidyalankara Pirivena.

Special Thanks for Venerable Palapoluwe Pannakitti thero - Vidyalankara Pirivena.

Vidyalankara Pirivana is an oasis of knowledge. Teachers who are eminent scholars of highest esteem nourish their students' minds on many disciplines including theravada Buddhism, ancient languages such as Pali and Sanskirt which were spoken by the eastern civilizations for centuries, Buddhsit civilization & culture and also taught modern study areas includ-

ing archaeology, anthropology, history, geography and philosophy. As a focal point to propagate

(or the Buddhist Council) in Sri-Lanka was done at Matale Alu Viharaya Temple duringAnuradhapura Kingdom era (01st Century BCE) and Tripitaka was written on ola leaves. The Sagayana (Buddhist Council) which was held at the Pirivena during Venerable Kiriwattuduve Sri Pranjnasara Thero's era took over 3 years to complete.

Furthermore the Vidyalankara Pirivena hosts sacred relics considered to be Lord Theravada Buddhism around Buddha's. This makes the Pirivena an

Peliyagoda Vidyalankara Pirivena

The Cradle of Wisdom

president of Dayaka Sabha) and Venerable Yakkaduve Sri Prajnarama Thero. This school was named to tribute Venerable Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka Thero. Later the school was relocated to its current premises at Waragoda road, Kelaniya and today Dharmaloka College is a well-established leading national school in Gampaha District of Sri Lanka

Today the Vidyalankara Pirivena stands tall as the center of Theravada Buddhist monastic training centers in Sri-Lanka. This is the Sri Lankan version of 'Nalanda University' of



for propagating pure Theravada Buddhism. Early Scholars of Vidyalankara were Experts of budddhist culture, philosophy, Theravada Dhamma main doctrines and early Buddhist languages such as Pali & Sanskrith. They passed on their knowledge over to generations of pupils who were intellectual Buddhist monks, recognized andvenerated nationally and internationally for their contri-bution to Dhamma and the society. Buddhist monks of the Pirivena had been pioneers in laying the foundation to the freedom movement of Ceylon, focused on gaining independence from British Colonial rule. Vidyalankara Pirivena's services are not limited to only the buddhsit clergy, but also to the civil society with a commitment to uplift moral and spiritual values of people.

The Vidyalankara Pirivena was established on the 01stof November 1875 by Venerable Rathmalane Dhammaloka Thero with his pupil Venerable Rathmalane Dhammarama Thero. In 1875, Venerable Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka Thero spent the rainy season (Vas) at the current premises where the Pirivena would be built later. At the time of Katina (end day ceremony of Rainy Season of a Buddhist Monk), the intension of building a Buddhist educational institution was proposed and agreed upon. Withthe leader ship and patronage of 3 prominent families in Waragoda Kelaniva, - Javatilake, Weeras inghe & Fernando families (Jayatilakes and Weerasinghes were inter-related), together with assistance of others involved, the educational institution (Shastra Shaala), Vihara and other necessary buildings were constructed and the Pirivena was established.

There were 6 past Principals (Parivenadhipathis) who matured the Pirivena. They were; Venerable Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka Thero (the founder), Venerable Rathmalane Sri Dharmarama Thero, Venerable Lunupokune Sri Dharmananda Thero, Venerable Kiriwattuduve Sri Praninasara Thero. Venerable Yakkaduve Sri Prajnarama Thero and Venerable Nattandiye Sri Prajnakara Thero. The present Parivenadhipathi (7th Principal) is Venerable Dr. Welamitiyawe Dharmakeerti Sri Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thero, the Chancellor of the Kelaniya University and the Chief Sanganavake of Colombo and Chilaw Districts.

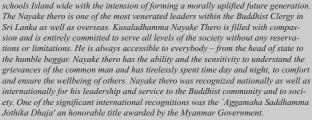
the world, Vidyalankara Pirivena educatednumerous foreign Buddhist monks and lavmen from all over the world including India, Burma, Thailand

(Siam), Cambodia, England, America, China and other countries. One of the eminent laymen pupils of the Pirivana was Sir Don Baron Jayatilaka, a leading figure of the freedom movement of Cevlon to gainindependence from British Colonial rule. Sir D. B. Javatilaka was sent to the Pirivena when he was young, to learn Sinhala, Pali & Sanskrith under the guidance of Venerable Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka Thero.

Later Sir D. B. graduated from Oxford University and became a barrister, yet he proudly indicated his 'alma mater' as the . Vidyalankara Pirivena. Venerable Kotahene Pannakitti Thero, VenerableBambarende Sir Seevali Thero, Venerable Walpola Rahula thero, Venerable Prof. Kakkapalliye Anuruddha thero were some of the eminent scholars who taught or associated closely with the Pirivena

The Pirivena ground is a holy place for Buddhists as this is the place where the entire Tripitaka (3 Doctrines of Theravada Buddhism) was counciled & re-chanted for the 2nd time in Sri Lanka. The first Sangayana

Current Parivenadhipathi, Venerable Welamitiyawe Dharmakeerti Sri Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thero Kusaladhamma Navake thero dedicated his life to the Ther avada dharma propagation, Buddhist monastic dharma education and wellbeing of all others in the society. The Nayaka thero emphasized the Dhamma education to Buddhists, consolidating dharma



even more revered holy place

Another significant event for the civil society was the establishment of Sri Dhar maloka English school in 1938 in Vidyalankara Pirivena grounds by Sir D B. Jayatilaka (at that time he was the

India (5th Century CE - 1200 CE) dedicated to promote Theravada Buddhism in the world. The Vidyalankara Pirivena is a not only a national asset for Sri Lanka but also a Buddhist heritage for all Buddhists around the world.

