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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



for propagating pure Theravada Buddhism. Early Scholars of Vidyalankara were Experts of buddhist culture, philosophy, Theravada Dhamma main doctrines and early Buddhist languages such as Pali & Sanskrit. They passed on their knowledge over to generations of pupils who were intellectual Buddhist monks, recognized and venerated nationally and internationally for their contribution 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 buddhist 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 01st of November 1875 by Venerable Rathmalane Dhammaloka Thero with his pupil Venerable Rathmalane Dhammarama Thero. In 1875, Venerable Rathmalane Sri Dhammaloka 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. With the leadership and patronage of 3 prominent families in Waragoda Kelaniya, - Jayatilake, Weerasinghe & 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 Rathmalane Sri Dhammaloka Thero (the founder), Venerable Rathmalane Sri Dhammarama Thero, Venerable Lunupokune Sri Dharmananda Thero, Venerable Kiriwattuduve Sri Pranjnasara Thero, Venerable Yakkaduve Sri Prajnarama Thero and Venerable Nattandiyi Sri Prajnaka Thero. The present Parivenadhipathi (7th Principal) is Venerable Dr. Welamitiyawe Dharmakeerti Sri Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thero, the Chancellor of the Kelaniya University and the Chief Sanganyake of Colombo and Chilaw Districts.

Vidyalankara Pirivena 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 Sanskrit which were spoken by the eastern civilizations for centuries, Buddhist civilization & culture and also taught modern study areas including archaeology, anthropology, history, geography and philosophy.

As a focal point to propagate Theravada Buddhism around

(or the Buddhist Council) in Sri-Lanka was done at Matale Alu Viharaya Temple during Anuradhapura 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 Buddha's. This makes the Pirivena an

president of Dayaka Sabha) and Venerable Yakkaduve Sri Prajnarama Thero. This school was named to tribute Venerable Rathmalane Sri Dhammaloka Thero. Later the school was relocated to its current premises at Waragoda road, Kelaniya and today Dhammaloka 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

Peliyagoda Vidyalankara Pirivena The Cradle of Wisdom



the world, Vidyalankara Pirivena educated numerous foreign Buddhist monks and laymen 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 Pirivena was Sir Don Baron Jayatilaka, a leading figure of the freedom movement of Ceylon to gain independence from British Colonial rule. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka was sent to the Pirivena when he was young, to learn Sinhala, Pali & Sanskrit under the guidance of Venerable Rathmalane Sri Dhammaloka 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, Venerable Bambaharende Sri 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 councilled & re-chanted for the 2nd time in Sri Lanka. The first Sangayana

Current Parivenadhipathi, Venerable Welamitiyawe Dharmakeerti Sri Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thero Kusaladhamma Nayake Thero dedicated his life to the Theravada 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

schools Island wide with the intension of forming a morally uplifted future generation. The Nayake Thero is one of the most venerated leaders within the Buddhist Clergy in Sri Lanka as well as overseas. Kusaladhamma Nayake Thero is filled with compassion and is entirely committed to serve all levels of the society without any reservations or limitations. He is always accessible to everybody – from the head of state to the humble beggar. Nayake Thero has the ability and the sensitivity to understand the grievances of the common man and has tirelessly spent time day and night, to comfort and ensure the wellbeing of others. Nayake Thero was recognized nationally as well as internationally for his leadership and service to the Buddhist community and to society. One of the significant international recognitions was the 'Aggamaha Saddhamma Jothika Dhaja' an honorable title awarded by the Myanmar Government.

even more revered holy place.

Another significant event for the civil society was the establishment of Sri Dhammaloka 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.

