

Newsletter



133, Vajira Road, Colombo 4. www.visakhav.org

VISAKHA VIDYALAYA OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION

MAY 2011

Buddhism and Women, Women and Buddhism

Our founder the Late Mrs. Jeramias Dias bequeathed us a powerful Buddhist heritage. She did so by initiating our alma mater for “the explicit purpose of imparting education to Buddhist girls”. I feel it is appropriate to pen a few words on a theme related to the practice and principles of Buddhism, in this issue of the Newsletter which is being released in the month of Vesak, as we celebrate the Sambudhathva Jayanthi - 2600 years since The Gautama Buddha attaining Supreme Enlightenment.

In Buddhist history, Visakha Maha Upasikawa ranks among the most prominent lay followers of her time. Peerless in her generosity, her donations to the Sasana and the Sangha gave her distinction as a woman unsurpassed; her outstanding intellect and virtues were likewise recognized. Based on the life of Visakha Maha Upasikawa and other contemporaries, as presented in the archives of Buddhist tradition, we see that the role women played was as important as men's. Locally, the role women have played in Buddhist history is legendary; conveying the Bo sapling from Bodhgaya and smuggling in the most holy Sacred Tooth Relic. The women of today however, do not enjoy a similarly equal status in Buddhist life. Is this not contrary to the non-gendered and tolerant nature of buddhist philosophy?

Restrictive attitudes that have discriminated against women over the years, have contributed to the prevailing social and cultural milieu. The extinction of the nuns' order and its absence from Sri Lanka for centuries illustrates this social discrimination. Even when renouncing the world for ordination, opportunities for women are hard to come by.

Let us hope that in this, the Sambudhathva Jayanthi Year, this imbalance will receive due attention, and be remedied. Buddhist doctrine clearly states that women are fully capable of the attainment of enlightenment with no gendered difference. The texts show the Pali term Arahant applied equally to monks and nuns.

The eight disciplinary rules said to have been laid down for nuns at the time of their first admission to monastic life, placing them directly under the jurisdiction of monks are themselves under scrutiny. Buddhist women all over

the world are working for change. Their geographical spread ranges from India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Nepal to Germany, France, England and The United States. Alan Spongburg in *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*, suggests that these eight rules are possibly revisions that occurred while being handed down through the commentarial or oral tradition. He quotes evidence from the Sanchi inscriptions as to the real situation in ancient times, when Buddhist women occupied prominent places as donors, catalysts, visionaries and workers.

It must however be mentioned that many have attempted to rectify the subjugation of Buddhist women. A few examples of such outstanding work include the empowerment of the religious lives of Indian Dalit women by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, assistance to nuns in Tibet from the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, and the assistance from Venerable Maha Goshanada to female Cambodian victims of the Khmer Rouge in resuming their practice of Buddhism. In this centenary year, let us look forward to institutional progress, growth of communities and improved networking among Buddhist women.

Closer home, it has been a busy year for the Religious Subcommittee which arranged a Bodhi Puja to commemorate the school's foundation and several other bodhi puja to invoke blessings on members who were unwell. The annual Pirith and Dane were conducted in the customary manner. A one day meditation program was conducted by past pupil Rev. Swarna Sil Maniyo, a proficient meditation guru. This event generated unprecedented interest and accolades.

Wishing you all a peaceful and fruitful Vesak,
With the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem,

Madhri Senanayake

***Na tena pandito hoti
yāvatā bahu bhāsati,
khemī averī abhaya
pandito ti pavuccati.***

One is not wise because one speaks much; one who is peaceable, friendly and fearless is called wise.

The Dhammapada, Dhammatthavagga; 258.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (MAY 15 – JULY 31ST, 2011)

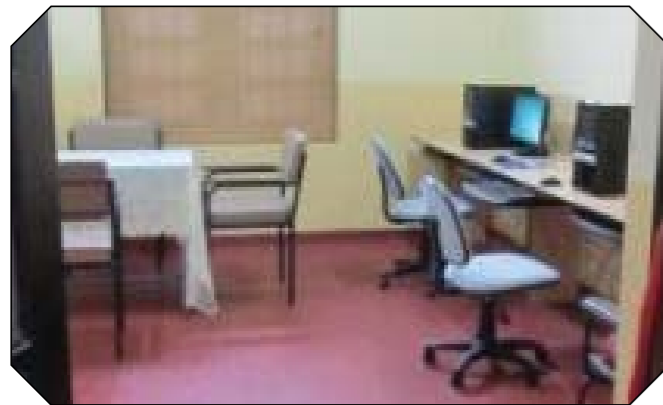
- May 28th** Vesak Project - Annual Donation to Cancer Institute, Maharagama
Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga
 0773-147-610
 nanduniwj@gmail.com
- June 18th** Annual General Meeting 2011
 School Hall, at 9am
 (followed by reunion lunch)
Inquiries: Udani Dharmadasa
 0773-447-014
 udanid@srilankan.aero
- July 9th** Bathiya n Santush Concert
 School Hall, at 7pm
 Tickets at AGM, school gate & OGA Office
Inquiries: Anusha Malwatte
 0773-63-44-59

- July 14th** Esala Sil Program
Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga
 0773-147-610
 nanduniwj@gmail.com
- July 23rd** Susan George Pulimood Oration - Prof. Emerita Preethi de Silva,
Inquiries: The Pulimood Trust
 Shantha Gunaratne
 0112-588-156

RECENT EVENTS OF NOTE

Computer Room in the Hostel

The OGA was able to present the school hostel with a computer room, equipped with two computers with internet facilities, in January, thanks to a generous donation from the Visakha Alumnae association of Southern California.



Avurudu Pola

The annual Avurudhu Pola was very well attended and raised a sum of two million rupees.

Annual Medical Camp

Conducted by past Visakhians in the medical profession for the convenience of Staff (past and present) and Old Girls, this annual feature was a resounding success. Specialists from almost all medical specialties were present, and an on-site laboratory and pharmacy provided services free of charge.

Foster School Project in Moneragala

The Foster School Project was launched at the Gaduwela Kanishta Vidyalaya, Badalkumbura, Moneragala on 29th January, 2011. The project included several aspects of development. Sanitary facilities were upgraded; providing pipe borne water, renovating two existing toilets and constructing a new toilet. Library books and sports equipment were donated and the 104 students received gift packs and stationery. The local members raised a sum of Rs 272,000/- for this activity and the Melbourne branch donated Rs 31,000/-.



VISAKHA VIDYALAYA OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association will be held **on Saturday, 18th day of June 2011 at 9.00 am** at the Jeremias Dias hall, Visakha Vidyalaya, 133, Vajira Road, Colombo 5 for the purpose of inter alia electing new members for the Executive Committee 2011/2012 and Auditors for the Association and to adopt resolutions as necessary.

Nominations in the relevant format should be sent by registered post to reach the VVOGA Secretariat (at the above address) latest by **Saturday the 4th day of June 2011 by 3.30 pm.**

The nomination list would be on display at the OGA Secretariat **until Sunday 12th June 2011.**
 The final date for objections to the nominations (if any) would be **Monday 13th June 2011.**

Voting will be open **until 11.30 am** on the day of the AGM.

Agenda for the AGM

- 01 Religious observances
- 02 Welcome address by the President
- 03 Reading of the Notice of the Meeting by the Secretary
- 04 Condolences
- 05 Excuses
- 06 Reading & adoption of minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting & matters arising from the minutes
- 07 Election of Office Bearers & Members of the Executive Committee
- 08 Tabling of the Secretaries' Report
- 09 Tabling & adoption of the Statement of Accounts by the Treasurer
- 10 Appointment of Auditors
- 11 Tabling & adoption of the Statement of Accounts of any Trusts or Affiliations of the Association by invitation
- 12 Consideration of any resolutions which are in order - discussion, voting & passing of resolutions
- 13 Vote of thanks
- 14 School song

NOMINATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2011/2012

Nominations are invited from the general membership to serve on the Executive Committee of the Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association. Nominations should be sent on the prescribed form (appended herewith)

The Executive Committee of the Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association comprises of the following

- President** - Principal of Visakha Vidyalaya (Ex officio)
Vice Presidents - Two posts
Joint Secretaries - Two posts
Treasurer - One post
Assistant Treasurer - One post

- Committee Members** - total 30
 60 yrs & above - 02 positions
 Above 40 yrs & below 60 yrs - 10 positions
 Above 30 yrs & below 40 yrs - 14 positions
 30 yrs & below - 03 positions
 Staff member - 01 position

The Criteria for eligibility & non eligibility as per the VVOGA constitution are as follows-

Eligibility -

- Any past pupil who has been a member of the Association for a minimum period of five (05) consecutive years ending on the 31st March 2011, shall be eligible for election to the Executive Committee.
- Members who have served on the Executive Committee for a period of 2 years or more & are of high integrity & efficient are eligible for nomination as Office Bearers. However the maximum number of occasions as Office Bearer is 06.

Non-eligibility

- No member whose daughter's application is to be submitted for admission to any grade of Visakha Vidyalaya for any particular year, shall be eligible for election to the Executive Committee for the one (01) year immediately preceding the year of submission of such application for admission and until the admission process is complete

eg: *No member whose daughter's application is to be submitted in 2012 shall be eligible for election to the Executive Committee 2011/2012 and until the admission process is complete*

- No member of the Association shall be elected a member of the Executive Committee for more than three (03) consecutive years. (this does not apply to Office Bearers)
- No member who has been elected as an Executive Committee Member or an Office Bearer in a Past Pupils' Association of another school; shall be eligible for election to the Executive Committee of the Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association for that particular year
- No member may be elected an Office Bearer of the Association on more than six (06) occasions
- An Office Bearer on being elected to such office each year could hold a particular office for a maximum period of two years. However in the absence of nominations for a particular office in any given year, such a member who has held such office for more than two years may be appointed to continue in such office for one more year.

Those who qualify to serve in the Executive Committee should send in their nominations in the attached format.

By order of the Executive Committee, Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association.

Sujeenie Gunasekera/Anushi Senaratne
Honorary Joint Secretary, 2010/2011
Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association

**VVOGA NOMINATION FORM
ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

PROPOSER:

I propose the name of :

(Name as used in Full. Please print)

For the Office of/ as member of the Executive
Member for Category

Over 60 yrs	
Over 40 & below 60 yrs	
Over 30 & below 40 yrs	
30 yrs & below	
Staff	

Membership No. of Nominee

.....
Name of Proposer & Membership No & date of Joining VVOGA

.....
Signature & Date

SECONDER:

I propose the name of :

(Name as used in Full. Please print)

For the Office of/ as member of the Executive
Member for Category

bearing membership No. for the above post.

.....
Name of Seconder & Membership No. date of Joining VVOGA

.....
Signature & Date

CONSENT OF NOMINEE

Name :

Address :

Telephone Nos. :

Membership No.: Date of Joining VVOGA

- 1) Year of submission of application for admission of daughter to Grade 1
- 2) Details of current membership in Executive committee or Office Bearer of any other PPA/ OGA
- 3) Been an Ex-Co Member consecutively for 2006/2007,2007/2008,2008/2009,2009/2010,2010/2011 - Yes/No
- 4) Nominee, Proposer & Seconder are Members of VVOGA since 31/3/2006-31/3/2011 Yes/ No

I consent to be nominated for the above post & hereby declare that the above information furnished by me is true & correct.

Signature:

Date:

**PLEASE FORWARD THE COMPLETED NOMINATION FORM BY REGISTERED POST TO
REACH THE JT. SECRETARIES ON OR BEFORE 3.30 PM ON 4th June 2011.**

**DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS, VVOGA
APPLICATION FORM**

1. Full Name (In block letters) :	
1.1 Surname : 1.2 First & Middle Names :	
2. Maiden Name :	3. Title : Miss/Mrs./Dr./Other – please specify
4. OGA Membership No.:	4a. OGA Member of the;
5. Your Current Occupation/Expertise:	VVOGA <input type="checkbox"/> VVOGA Medarata Branch <input type="checkbox"/> Past Pupils of Visakha, UK Branch <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Professional qualifications if any:	VVOGA, Victoria Branch <input type="checkbox"/> VVOGA, East Coast, USA <input type="checkbox"/> Visakha Alumni Association of South California <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <input type="checkbox"/>
7. 7.1 Place of Work:	8. 8.1 Residential Address:
7.2 Address:	8.2 Telephone No:
7.3 Telephone No:	8.3 Mobile No:
7.4 Mobile No:	8.4 E-mail Address:
7.5 E-mail Address:	
I hereby declare that the information given above is true, correct and complete. I shall bear the responsibility for the veracity of the above information.	
Date:	Signature:
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY Accepted for inclusion in the Directory of Members, VVOGA	
..... Hony. Jt. Secretary, VVOGA	
<i>Please see overleaf for instructions</i>	

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hall Renovation and Chair Replacement Fund

Renovation of the Jeremias Dias hall and replacement of its chairs is urgently needed. The project is estimated to cost in excess of Rs. 20 million. Each chair costs Rs. 15,000/-.

Those interested are encouraged to make donations at the OGA Office in favour of the “Hall Renovation and Chair Replacement Fund”.

Inquiries: Punsirini Malawi 0777-222-988
punsirini@yahoo.com

Bathiya n Santhush Concert

Activities are underway to stage a Bathiya n Santhush Concert at school on July 9th as a fundraiser for the above-mentioned project. With a target crowd of 1,600 school-age children and adults, the estimated expense is Rs 800,000/-. The OGA requests its membership to assist by finding advertisers or sponsors.

Inquiries: Anusha Malwatta
0773-63-44-59

School Admission

Since it was noted that a significant number of students were admitted to Grade 1 on ‘area basis’, in the 2011 intake, the OGA advises past pupils residing in Colombo and the suburbs to submit applications in both ‘Old Girl’ and ‘area basis’ categories when applying for school entrance for children.

School Academic Achievements

The OGA lauds the Principal, Teachers and Students for securing five of the top ten rankings at the GCE O/L Examination, 2010.

Obituaries

Mrs. Agnes Abeysekera, past pupil, member of the teaching staff for over twenty-five years, and former Hony. secretary VVOGA passed away after a brief illness in March, 2011. She is sadly missed by her family and fondly remembered by all who knew her.

We announce with sadness the demise of **Mrs. Nita Gunasekera**, in February, 2011.

Reunion Lunch

A reunion lunch at the Bougainvilleæ block canteen will follow the AGM. Tickets priced at Rs. 850/- will be available from June at the school gate. It is expected that this event will generate good participation since the reunion trip was not held this year.

Members’ Directory

The establishment of a network of Past Visakhians who could be resourced to render assistance and thereby support, promote and foster the welfare of Visakha Vidyalaya, the principal, members of staff, students and past pupils is underway.

Applications forms can be obtained from the OGA Secretariat (Weekdays 8 am - 1.30 pm) or downloaded from www.visakhav.org. Completed forms should be handed over either to the OGA Secretariat (at the above times) or to the Joint Secretaries, VVOGA. Promotion of the Directory among members would be greatly appreciated.

Shanta Jayalath becomes Chief Commissioner

Mrs Shanta Jayalath née Wickremasinghe, former Head Prefect of Visakha, was recently appointed Chief Commissioner of the Sri Lanka Girl Guides Association, in recognition of her yeoman service to Girl Guiding. The OGA wishes her the very best in contributing to the emancipation of women and girls in Sri Lanka.

From the Editor

How can we make this newsletter better? If you have burning comments, suggestions, information you feel should appear in the newsletter, or are interested in advertising with us, please feel free to contact the Editor, at; editor.vvoga@gmail.com.

Each paper copy of the newsletter consumes valuable money and paper, not to mention time of many volunteers whose services ensure this is addressed, stamped, and mailed.

I look forward to a time when all those with the necessary facilities opt to receive e-newsletters to the inbox rather than copies by post. If you wish to opt for the e-newsletter instead of a paper copy, please contact:

Madhri Senanayake editor.vvoga@gmail.com

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133, Vajira Road,
Colombo 05.

BATHIYA N SANTHUSH

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LIVE IN CONCERT

*Featuring Ashanthi, Randhir & Umariya
Guest performance by Dushyanth Weeraman*



A Fund Raiser Organised by Visakha Vidyalaya OGA
On Saturday
9th July 2011 at 7.00 pm
Jeremias Dias Hall, Visakha Vidyalaya, Colombo 05
Tickets : Rs.2000, 1000, 500
Tickets available at Visakha OGA Office