

L.H. METTANANDA



L.H. Mettananda

In the aftermath of the turbulent departure of A.B. Perera in late 1945, Lokusatu Hewa Mettananda was given the task of first re-uniting and then leading Ananda in the post-WW II era. He had already had a four-year spell (1932-36) managing and guiding Ananda as Acting Principal, during which he had won the admiration of all whilst Kularatne was resurrecting Dharmaraja College.

However, in 1945 he was 51 years old and the challenges before him were much greater. On his first day as Principal, some students and staff openly protested and his personal vehicle was also damaged. He, however, remained restrained and calm and order was restored so that the College could go back to resuming its rise. In the nine years that followed, Mettananda guided the school through Independence and beyond, always maintaining the ideals of Ananda that set her apart and playing his role on the national stage as Principals of Ananda were expected to do.

Born on 19th March 1894 at Kaluwadumulla, Ambalangoda, Mettananda was educated at the Buddhist English School at Patabendimulla, which is now named Dharmasoka College, and thereafter at Richmond College, Galle where he distinguished himself as a secondary school student. At Richmond he was a contemporary of Kularatne who was one year older. In 1912 he passed the Cambridge Senior Examination and in 1913 the London Matriculation examination. He decided quite early in life to become a teacher and enrolled for training at the Government Teacher Training College, Colombo where he spent 1914 and 1915. Whilst at the Training College he joined the Volunteer Corps for a time during the Sinhalese Muslim riots in 1915. From 1916 to 1918 he was on the tutorial staff of Holy Cross College, Kalutara getting practical experience.

In the meantime, he graduated as a first class Trained Teacher and in March 1919 joined as an assistant teacher at Ananda College, which was making rapid progress under the Principalship of P. de S Kularatne.

Whilst teaching at Ananda he obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of London as an external student in 1921.

In 1924 Kularatne selected Mettananda as the Principal of the branch of Ananda started that year at Campbell Place, Colombo 10. The branch commenced with staff and students transferred from Ananda. Mettananda developed this new institution to a full-fledged school within two years and it was registered as a separate college from 1st November 1925 and given the name Nalanda Vidyalyaya. G.P. Malalasekera who had by that time returned from England after a two year period of study was made the Principal of Nalanda.

Mettananda returned to Ananda College as its Vice Principal and continued in this post till mid-1928 when he obtained two years' leave from the Buddhist Theosophical Society to proceed to England for higher studies. He registered at the London Day Training College in October 1928 and passed the Teachers' Diploma in 1930. He also registered at the University of London as a student for his M.A. The topic of his thesis was, "The Theory and Practice of Education as Illustrated by the Present Education System of Ceylon." However, the thesis that was submitted was not approved by the University authorities. He returned to Ceylon and reverted to the post of Vice Principal, Ananda College in 1931.

Mettananda's time as the Head of Ananda consists of two parts; the first from 1932 to 1936 when he acted as Principal during the four years that Kularatne spent at Dharmaraja College Kandy and the second from 1945 to 1954, as Principal of Ananda.

METTANANDA AT THE HELM OF ANANDA (1932-1936)

The country was still suffering from the effects of the global great depression of the 1930's when Kularatne was persuaded to go as Principal and stabilise Dharmaraja College, Kandy. He took over duties on November 1st 1932 and Mettananda was appointed the acting Principal of Ananda, which he held till Kularatne's return in April 1936. In fact, the BTS appointed him Principal on 1st July 1935 in recognition of his performance and he held the position for 9 months, until 31st March, when Kularatne resumed his office.

In the annual prize report for 1932-'33, Mettananda lavished praise on Kularatne for his services to Ananda and for upholding the traditions of the school. Mettananda himself continued to uphold these traditions and improved the quality of education and examination results at Ananda.

The tradition of infusing the teachings of The Buddha in the students continued with two erudite monks, Ven. Pitadeniya Ratnapala and Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya took up residence at the College. These two monks taught the Dhamma to the Buddhist students at all levels of the College and this helped overcome the scarcity of suitable texts at the time. Mettananda also actively promoted teaching students in their mother tongue.

HANDICRAFTS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The workshop that had been started at Ananda by M. E. Fernando in 1931 gained in importance after Mettananda assumed duties. Handicrafts, consisting mainly of woodworking, ironworking and bookbinding, were introduced to broaden the curriculum, perhaps for the first time in a school in Ceylon. It was developed first as a hobby and later introduced into the formal curriculum as an optional alternative to Latin. Mettananda initiated the formation of the Handicrafts Club, which produced highly skilled students who contributed to the development of Ananda by making furniture items required by the fast expanding school. Enthusiastic experts unconnected with the school, who were impressed by the efforts and success of teachers and students, assisted the school by training students in handicrafts or promoting and purchasing equipment made by them.

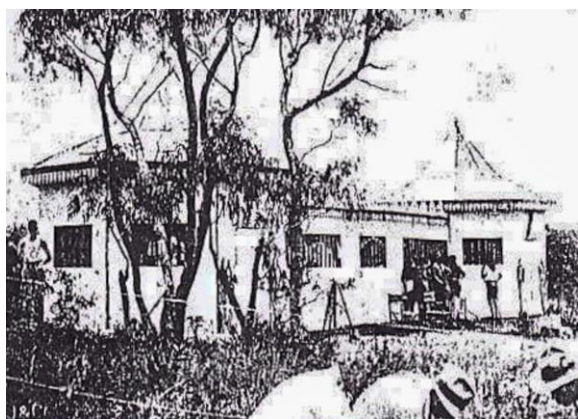
Students also contributed by making beds and other items of furniture for the hostel. They also undertook the repairs of desks and chairs. The Hansard (the official publication of the proceedings of the State Legislature) was also bound at Ananda and the Minister of Education had in a letter thanked the school for providing this service. Gardening was another subject that was introduced into the curriculum. In addition to imparting practical skills, participation helped the students to appreciate the importance and nature of manual work and, thereby, the dignity of labour.



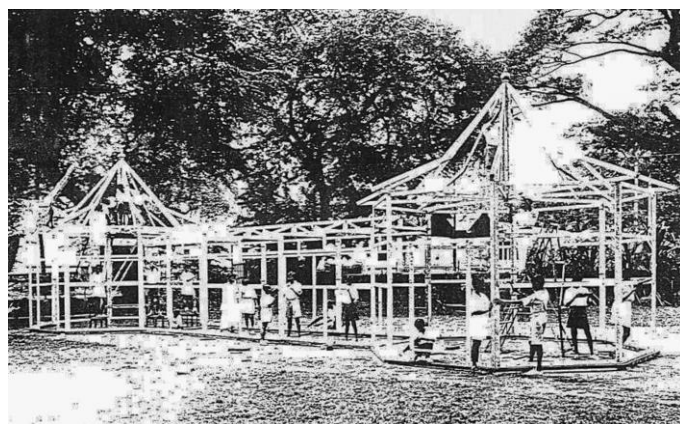
A unique opportunity presented itself to the Handicrafts Club when the first Australian Pan Pacific Scout Jamboree was held in Frankston from 27th December 1934 to 13th January 1935. Ananda was commissioned to construct the Ceylon pavilion in a form that would enable it to be assembled from parts shipped to Australia. A collapsible scale-model of the Temple of the Sacred Tooth in Kandy, consisting of over 500 pieces of wood, iron and ornamental fretwork was constructed within five days at the College workshop. This was the first international gathering of Scouts outside of the United Kingdom and the only Jamboree attended by the founder of scouting, Lord Robert Baden-Powell.

M.E. Fernando, the Teacher in Charge of Geography and Handicraft at Ananda wrote in the Anandian Magazine of 1935 –

“The construction of the Ceylon Hut was a mighty task for anybody to venture on under the circumstances. However, to the great surprise and satisfaction of all concerned the beautiful structure of such large dimensions was completed within five days! It was quite natural that at the end every one of the twenty odd young craftsmen who constructed it looked at it with pride and joy of having done something worth doing.”



**“The Ceylon Exhibition Hut”
(As It Appeared In Australia)**



**Anandian craftsmen finishing the structure
of “The Ceylon Exhibition Hut”**

It must be recorded that all this would not have been possible if not for the supervision of M.E. Fernando, the much respected and indefatigable teacher who passed away at a relatively young age, whilst serving on the staff at Ananda.

PRACTICAL SOCIAL SERVICE

The *Ananda Paropakara Samithiya* was formed by the staff and pupils of Ananda during the Kularatne period, with the primary aim of helping the poor people in the vicinity of the school. Mettananda expanded the scope of the society to train students in social service in general and this tradition continued.

The Malaria epidemic and famine during 1934-35 provided an opportunity for the society to show their dedication. Mettananda was elected the President of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress in 1935 and in this capacity he mobilised the staff and students to provide relief alongside the agents of government. A report submitted in 1936 to the State Council by the Commissioner for Relief, H.E. Newnham, stated :

“The Ceylon Buddhist Congress under the direction of Mettananda, the Principal of Ananda College gave me the fullest assistance in undertaking the distribution of these ‘comforts’ and every week-end for a period of three months he visited those areas in the Kegalle District I had noted as being in need of the grant of relief in addition to that supplied by Government. Mettananda had organized his workers in a most efficient manner and there were no villages in which they would not undertake distribution however remote they might be. Further, the regularity with which these visits were paid enabled me to place the highest confidence in his organization and with certainty”

PRIMARY SCHOOL AS A MIXED SCHOOL

Mettananda addressed the needs of the teachers of the school in order to attract and retain the best staff to make Ananda the foremost seat of learning in the country. He realized the difficulties of young teachers who had children of school going age and decided to register the primary section of Ananda as a mixed school to enable the teachers of the school to admit their daughters to Ananda without having to take them elsewhere. It enabled the teachers to send all their children, boys and girls to one school and be less distracted in their professional tasks. The girls admitted to Ananda were allowed to continue up to middle and upper school if they were children of teachers. Others had to move over to girls’ schools at Grade 1 (Year VI).

DISCIPLINE

The Kularatne years at Ananda made it one of the best disciplined schools in the island. He was reputed for expelling students for gross violation of a clearly understood code of conduct, irrespective of their social position, connections, prowess in sports or excellence in studies. No one was allowed to set bad precedents or mar the name of the school. Lesser offences were tackled more leniently but no one was left in doubt about the importance of discipline. Mettananda having seen this aspect of Kularatne’s stewardship instilled in every Anandian the value of punctuality, decorum, proper conduct and attention to detail. This was a hallmark of his period.

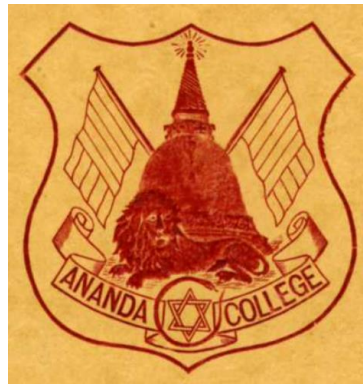
TRADITIONS AND CHANGE

Mettananda respected and valued traditions and was comfortable with conventions. But he was ever willing to make changes if they were for the good of the school stating that one of the strongest traditions of Ananda was the tradition to change when change was required.

The new college Crest developed under Mettananda’s direction during the four year stewardship was one such change. The new crest, with a different shape altogether, first appeared on the cover of the College magazine 1934/35. Incidentally, the previous crest is still to be seen above the main entrance to the Old Hostel building completed in 1923. The only change that has been made to the Mettananda version of the crest was the change of the text of the College motto from English characters to Sinhala in 1956.



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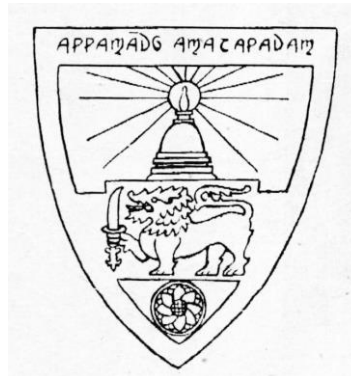
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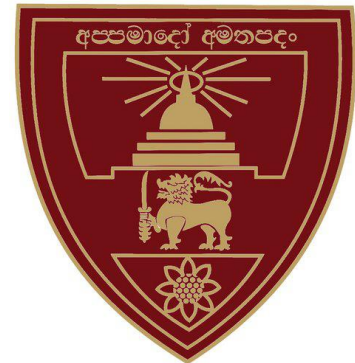
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The evolution of the College crest

During the early 1930s, barely 50 years after establishing Ananda, the strenuous efforts of its founders had borne fruit by producing the Principals of six leading Buddhist Schools; G.K.W. Perera at Nalanda College; F.R. Jayasuriya at Dharmasoka College, Ambalangoda; E.W. Adikaram at Ananda Sastralaya, Kotte; E.A. Wijesuriya at Mahinda College, Galle; and E. Ediriwira at Moratu Vidyalaya, Moratuwa. Mettananda joined this band in 1936 when, with the return of Kularatne to Ananda in her Golden Jubilee year, he took up the challenge of being Principal of a major Buddhist school – Dharmaraja College, Kandy. (More details are provided in a post-script to this chapter). He had, of course already effectively handled the challenge at Ananda for four years. In the Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Kularatne made reference to Mettananda in glowing terms for the work done at Ananda in such a short period.

FAR REACHING CHANGES IN EDUCATION

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Ceylon was dragged into this major conflict. Political activity came to a standstill. However, the agitation for educational reforms went ahead. Mettananda understood the problems of the under-privileged Sinhalese Buddhists in educating their children due to lack of proper schools. Even the middle and upper class Buddhists had a problem in not having the opportunity to send their children to good Buddhist seats of learning. As a result, many of them sent their children to missionary schools.

Discussions were taking place in the early 1940s to introduce a system of Education without the payment of fees from the kindergarten to the University. Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara, Minister of Education at the time, led the movement to introduce this far reaching, progressive measure. Dr. Kannangara was ably supported by people like Mettananda, E.W. Adikaram and Ananda Mivanapalana and by a large number of members in the State Council. Mettananda galvanized his staff, students, Old Boys and the general public by writing to the newspapers and holding public meetings. In the State Council the progressive measure was ably supported by A. Ratnayake, P.de S Kularatne and several others. The Christian Establishment and even some rich Buddhists opposed this measure.

After much discussion in the State Council, history making measures became law on the 1st of October 1945 to make free education a reality. In the first place there was no payment to obtain education from the Kindergarten to the University. Secondly, it was decided to introduce the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the primary classes. The teaching in the vernacular was to be introduced gradually to the higher classes as time went by. Coupled with these, Central Schools were established island-wide, to provide good educational facilities in the rural areas.

Ananda experienced further difficulties when all buildings except the Science Laboratories were taken over for war purposes. To cope with this situation branches were opened in January 1945, at Bambalapitiya and at Kolonnawa catering for students over 15 years of age. Despite severe difficulties every effort was made to continue the education of students uninterrupted.

When the war ended in 1945 all branches except the Pannipitiya branch and the Gampaha branch (which operated till April 1946) were closed down. The Pannipitiya branch was registered as a branch of the college in May 1942. It was registered as a separate school in October 1943 and named Dharmapala Vidyalaya. A man in his early twenties, J.E. Jayasuriya, later a renowned educationist, was appointed as Principal. To give the school a sound beginning, Ananda transferred some of its senior teachers to its offspring. Dharmapala Vidyalaya was the second school established by Ananda, the first being Nalanda Vidyalaya. These two institutions were not appended with the western term 'College' for a seat of learning but were called 'Vidyalaya' to instil pride in the national languages (Vidyalaya in Sinhala and Vidyalayam in Tamil). This was a symbol of the national reawakening movement that found inspiration in Ananda and used its hallowed land as a centre for the movement's vital meetings and as a launching pad to regain the rights of the people and their pride as Ceylonese.

METTANANDA AS PRINCIPAL 1945-1954

L.H. Mettananda was appointed Principal of Ananda College on the same day that A.B. Perera resigned, 5th November 1945. Restless students agitated by the BTS action that led to the premature departure of Perera received Mettananda with hostility and treated him as an appendage of the offending BTS. Mettananda's tenure and service at Ananda as a teacher, vice principal and as Acting Principal and his accomplishments at Dharmaraja did not have a calming effect on the unruly students.

When Mettananda arrived at the school on the first day in his private car (a Vauxhall 14 – registration number X-6135) it was stoned and damaged. Loud jeers showed the resentment of students as he entered the premises. School discipline was overtaken by hooliganism by students who had no clear leader. The strength of character of Mettananda and his leadership qualities were shown here. Within days he won the confidence of the antagonistic staff and students and the highly volatile situation was brought under control and normalcy restored.

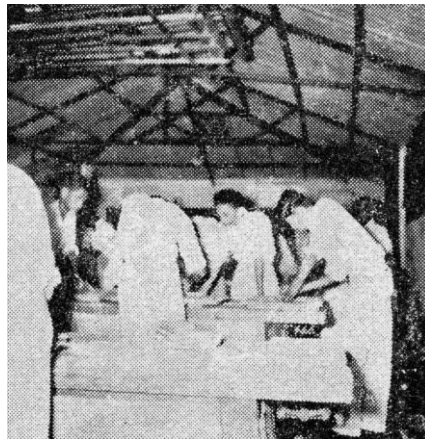
The Second World War had just ended and the country was ready for a new beginning. So was Ananda under its new Principal Mettananda. The College buildings that were occupied by the British Army were de-requisitioned in October 1945.

Spurred on by the turn of events at the school and the country and undeterred by the unwelcome reception he had on assuming office as the Principal, Mettananda set out with zeal to instil discipline among staff and students, win their confidence, improve the quality of education under a well thought out plan and launch an ambitious programme for the construction of buildings.

BUILDINGS

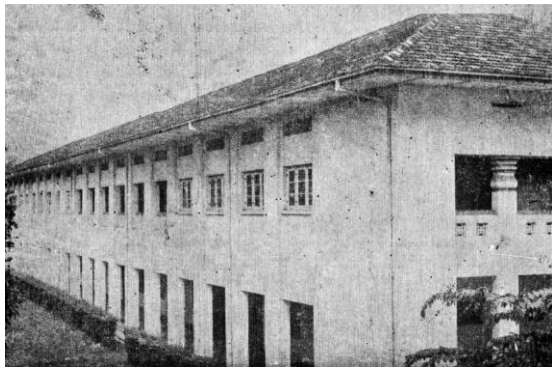
In rebuilding Ananda Mettananda left the main buildings intact. Those which were temporary and inadequate, constructed to cope with the sudden influx of new students after World War II, were to be soon replaced. The general layout of the building plan was prepared with meticulous care. That E-shaped plan is still in place in the main section of the school and stands out from the area developed after the schools takeover by the State in 1961.

The infrastructure developments he envisaged and translated into well thought out blueprints were as ambitious as what Ananda had achieved up to then. The funds required would have discouraged any person with less metal than the steely Mettananda. To raise funds for the buildings he fell back on well-wishers, philanthropists and alumni of Ananda, and also held three carnivals in 1946, 1950 and 1953. The Parent Teachers' Association was formed to organize events and collect funds. The new workshop building was entirely funded by the PTA.



Workshop Building and students at work

The Ananda Trust consisting of eminent persons was formed with a view to controlling the funds that were collected or were donated. According to the Souvenir printed on the occasion of the 1950 carnival the estimated cost of the two new buildings was Rs.450,000. The Science Laboratory was to cost Rs.250,000 and the Hostel extension, Rs.200,000. On the 2nd of February 1950 the foundation stone was laid for the construction of the Science Block by the Prime Minister, D.S. Senanayake. On the same day Mudaliyar J. Madanayake laid the foundation for the construction of the hostel extension. The new science laboratory blueprint was prepared by architects Billimoria, de Silva, Peiris and Panditharatne. The plans were substantially modified by the science staff of the College, guided by Prof. A.W.R. Mailvaganam and others at the University of Ceylon. The ambition to have a science laboratory better than in any school in the country and the meticulous planning and wide consultations resulted in the construction of a facility as good as that of the only university in Ceylon at that time. Students and staff took great pride in it and the results at the university entrance examination vastly improved.



The Science Building (now named the Fritz Kunz Building)



The Botany Lab

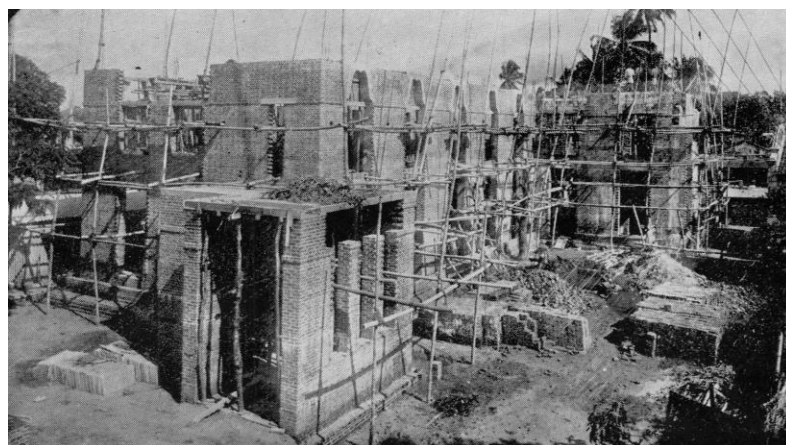


The Physics Lab

The final product was a tribute to the hard work and dedication of M.W. Karunananda, head of the science section (later Principal), M.E. Fernando and others who designed furniture and the interior of the building. After the sudden death of M E Fernando in July 1949 Karunananda together with V. Kirtisinghe (who later served as Vice Principal) and many others supervised the construction work. On 29th January 1953, Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake declared open the Science Block. On the same day he laid the foundation stone for the new '*Viharaya*' (shrine room).

Speaking on this occasion Mettananda said –

“The greatness of Ananda College springs from the fact that it was the outward manifestation of the inner longing of a helpless people to keep alive what they have to be their priceless heritage – their own Dhamma, which they have preserved in spite of terrible odds for over 2,000 years”



Buddha Jayanthi (Olcott) Building under construction

Twenty well-wishers laid foundation stones to inaugurate the construction of two elegant three storeyed blocks with a Kandyan roof and facade to house a total of twenty four classrooms. The work on these two buildings (named the Buddha Jayanthi or Olcott Building and the Leadbeater Building) was completed by Mettananda's successor, S.A. Wijayatilake and the Ananda *Viharaya* many years later by Principal E.A. Perusinghe. The desks and chairs were also specially designed and made at the same time to give the students

some of the best class rooms in the country. Today these two buildings adorn the front of the school premises on either side of the *Vihara*.

The hostel extension consisting of six large halls, toilet facilities and accommodation for teachers was opened in January 1954. Gate Mudliyar R.J. Wijetunga of Akuressa, who was one of many Buddhist philanthropists impressed by the massive strides made by Ananda which they regarded as the symbol of Buddhist and national reawakening, made a handsome contribution of Rs.50,000 towards this project. These halls, three on each of the two floors connected up with the much older but magnificent colonial architecture building with three halls and a block of class rooms. Behind the halls were the kitchen, minor staff quarters, the bakery and the warden's quarters. These went into much neglect after the schools take-over. It required the Old Hostellers' Association, in the mid-1980s to refurbish all the hostel buildings. Once again the condition of the buildings deteriorated due to poor maintenance and in 2011 the government undertook an extensive renovation of the hostel through the intervention of an old Anandian hosteller, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa.



Hostel extension (now named Mettananda Mandiraya)

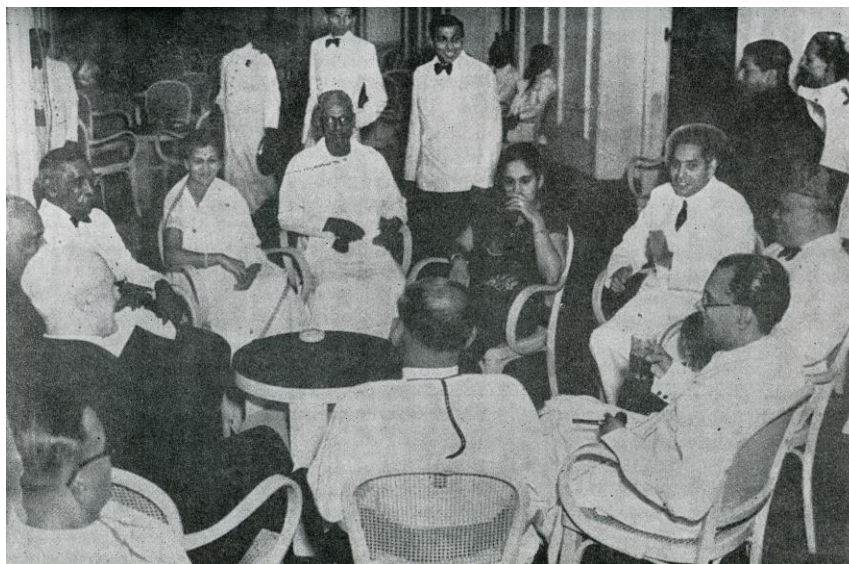
The building constructions handed over to his successor for completion by Mettananda show his vision, long term planning and foresight to use the advice of experts in a quest for quality. No task was too big for him. He realized that a state-of-the-art science laboratory would help Ananda attract the best students and teachers and produce the best examination results. All these he achieved whilst being actively engaged in national policy on education. He was undoubtedly a remarkable personality to have contributed to the school's development so effectively and to make Ananda the foremost seat of learning. The backing he had from the highest in the land was proof of the admiration and respect he earned as the Principal of Ananda.

ENTERING THE FREE EDUCATION SCHEME

Commenting on the entry of Ananda College into the Free Education Scheme in the Prize Day report of 1946 (covering 1936 to 1946), Mettananda had some interesting remarks to make. He stressed that Ananda had special needs and aspirations. Ananda cannot be satisfied with anything but the best in qualified teachers and the best of equipment. He estimated that the College needed at least Rs. 90,000 an year to supplement the government grant and facilities fees. Until such arrangements were available he could not recommend to the Management to enter the scheme. However, on the 1st of April 1951, with the cooperation of the old boys and the parents it was decided to take the vital step of entering the Free Education Scheme.

LANGUAGE POLICY

Ananda was one of the first schools to start teaching in the mother tongue, first in the Primary School and later on in the post-primary school, in keeping with the policy of the Government. At the same time the teaching of Tamil language to Sinhala students was included in the curriculum. Similarly, an effort was made to teach Sinhala to Tamil students. Mettananda's emphasis on teaching pupils of the primary school and the students in the pre-senior forms in their mother tongue, Sinhala or Tamil, was often misunderstood by many. They felt that Mettananda was against the teaching of English and the higher form subjects in English. Later on in this chapter a statement he made on the language policy is quoted to dispel this misinterpretation.



From left : Sir Ivor Jennings, C. Suntheralingam, D.S. Senanayake, Mrs Pulimood (Principal of Visakha Vidyalaya), L.H. Mettananda, Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, A.M.A. Aziz, T.B. Jayah, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Father Peter Pillai (Rector of St. Joseph's College) – In the left foreground Sam Wijesinghe at the OBA Dinner held on 5 November 1949

BRILLIANCE IN THE SCIENCE STREAM

At this time the standard of education that was imparted was of an extremely high quality. Very good results were produced in the Science and Arts fields in the senior and post-senior classes. Much attention was paid to the teaching of science subjects. Excellent results were obtained in the University Entrance examinations in Engineering, Medicine and Science. This was a period of brilliance which followed a period of steady progress. Sir Nicholas Attygalle, then Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon, praised the performance of the College.

Ananda produced the best results in Science when M.W. Karunananda and his team of science teachers held the fort. His team consisted of D.W. J. Perera (mathematics), M.K.N. Panikkar (zoology), C.S. Menon (botany), V. Kirtisinghe (physics), G.C.J. Ondaatje (physics), P.V. Rajan (botany), N.K. Govindapillai, H.A. Mitrasena (mathematics), K. Arulambalam (chemistry), E.M. Selvaratnam (botany), P.M.W. Wijesuriya (mathematics), Tennyson Rodrigo (chemistry), A.B. Kahawatte (chemistry), D.G. Kumaradasa and C.M. Weeraratne (mathematics). With such a galaxy of able teachers, and the facility of a well equipped laboratory, the science department came to be called in the school circles, the “science faculty” and its head the “Dean” in University parlance. The demand for a place at Ananda grew and several students from established schools in Colombo and Kandy joined Ananda as the best place to improve their chances of entry to university in the science stream.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Following are the detailed results at the University entrance examination (excluding the Anandians who entered as private candidates in their third attempt)

Year	1951	1952	1953	1954
Arts	11	19	14	8
Science	9	16	8	5
Medicine	20	15	7	12
Engineering	4	4	5	5
Vet. Science	1	5		1
Agriculture		1		1
Law		1		

(Source – the “Anandian” 1973)

TEACHING SCIENCE IN THE MOTHER TONGUE

Ananda's contribution to teaching Science was not confined to producing excellent examination results. There was another task. The demand was for the teaching of all subjects in the mother tongue, especially Science. The challenge was to teach science in the vernacular which had never been done before. Sceptics thought it could never be done. M.W. Karunananda accepted the daunting mission and Mettananda was all for it. The main obstacles were the non availability of text books and teachers able to teach in Sinhala. The best text books are those written by teachers with working experience and not translations made by people who are not familiar with the subject matter. Ananda could claim to have taken the pioneering step to disseminate science knowledge in Sinhala. Karunananda himself produced books in Sinhala for GCE Ordinary Level examinations covering Physics and Chemistry. These two books soon gained acceptance as the standard text books in the country. Later on L.T. Jayaweera produced a book on Botany in Sinhala. A.A. Fernando, a teacher in charge of Sinhala, developed most of the Sinhala words for scientific terms.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mettananda did not neglect the development of sports. The school annexed the Tarbat Challenge Trophy for the championship team at the national athletics meet for the first time in 1954. The school also won the Public Schools' Challenge Cup for Field Events. The achievements of the athletes are covered in a separate chapter.



Tarbat Cup Winners - 1954

The quality of the Annual Athletic Championship Meetings held during this period when Ananda became champions in Athletics can be seen from the programme published for the 1953 Meet. The list of officials for the events given in the first page is testimony to the meticulous arrangements made and the Old Boys and staff who officiated as judges and in other capacities. They include Anandians who reached eminent positions later in their careers.

In spite of there being no Swimming Pool at the school, Ananda produced two national swimming champions, Geoffrey Marks and his brother Boris. Geoffrey was the first swimmer from Ananda to represent Ceylon. At the 1952 Olympic Games held in Helsinki he participated in the 1,500 and 400 metres free style events. He also won the two-mile Sea Swim several times.

Hockey and Soccer were reintroduced in 1949 and developed to make them popular activities at Ananda. In Hockey the school had a record of victories in the few fixtures that it had. Ananda also performed well in badminton and in 1952 Asoka Amerasekera emerged the National Badminton Champion.

Ananda won the Stubbs Shield in boxing many times until it was banned in school for safety reasons. In 1952 Anandian H.P. Jayasuriya represented Ceylon at the Helsinki Olympic Games in boxing.

Cricket was not neglected and Ananda was among the Top Six in the country. In 1950 the team remained unbeaten and the captain of the Ananda team, Bonny Wijesinghe had the distinction of captaining the Combined Colleges XI. Another Anandian, Henry Seneviratne captained the Combined Schools Cricket team against the SSC in 1952.

A special feature of cricket at Ananda in the Kularatne-Mettananda years was the impetus it gave to schools outside Colombo and Kandy to compete with strong teams like Ananda and help build them up. The leading teams at that time were St. Thomas', Mt. Lavinia, Royal, St. Joseph's, St. Benedict's, St. Peter's, Wesley, Zahira, Ananda and Nalanda from Colombo and Trinity and St. Anthony's from Kandy. These teams had annual encounters with each other. It was only Ananda and Nalanda that gave emerging cricket teams from Dharmaraja, Mahinda, Dharmapala and other Buddhist schools regular cricket fixtures. What Ananda and Nalanda did in those years to develop talented cricketers from the outstations bore fruit only after Sri Lanka gained test status in 1982.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CADETING

Among schools Ananda had performed exceptionally well in cadeting from the late 1920s. In 1934 Ananda College won the Governors' Cup for the first time in the history of the school. This Cup was the most coveted prize in rifle shooting in the island. The victorious team that outperformed the regular Army contingent was led by Lt. R.S. Jayawickrama. Mettananda saw the value of cadeting to discipline and train the students. He was to take Ananda to greater heights in this field during his term as Principal from 1945 to 1954. The attainments of Lt. G.W. Rajapaksa, his officers and cadets between 1948 and 1951 set new standards. They repeatedly annexed every possible Cadeting and Rifle shooting trophy. They beat the Armed forces in open competition. Ananda's performance won many admirers and the general public who looked up to Ananda for inspiration took pride in the achievements of the school.

The Ananda College shooting team received the following tribute from "Cicerone", a columnist of the Sunday Times Illustrated on 10th June 1951.

"I think the nicest thing I've seen in the last few days is the Rifle team of the Ananda College Cadet Corps. Quite apart from all the prizes they took they literally stole the show at the annual prize-giving of the Ceylon Rifle association with their smart appearance and their slick military bearing. When they went up repeatedly to receive their prizes from Lord Soulbury, I fancy as much of the applause which greeted these lads for their appearance as for the feats on the range. Many a senior officer present could scarce forbear to cheer, and I noticed the Brigadier the Earl of Caithness scrutinizing them closely and with a highly approving look in his eye."

He was commenting on the Ceylon Rifle Association's prize distribution held at the Grand Oriental Hotel. Lord Soulbury presided over the function. The following were members of this victorious team at the first Rifle Meet of the Army - Cpl. Gamini Jayatilaka, Cpl.N. K. Dissanayake, Cdt. Asoka Jayawardena, Cpl. Hamilton Wanasinghe and L/Cpl A.P. Madurapperuma .

In spite of the persistent success in cadeting, students of Ananda did not find their way to the prestigious positions among new recruits in the army. The Sandhurst trainees almost always were selected from the non-Buddhist schools and State-owned Royal College. The situation was highly anomalous and unjust. As a stronghold of national sentiment Ananda had been viewed with suspicion and this seemed to continue even after independence in 1948.

At this juncture Mettananda took up the question of discrimination against Anandians in recruitment to the armed forces with the Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake. Mettananda pointed out that if his students had been purposely kept out of the armed forces by the British rulers, there was no ground for such a policy in an independent country. He only wanted the Anandians to be considered for such appointments and given the same chances as candidates from any other school. Mettananda's case was irresistible and the Prime Minister conceded his point. Once the system of selection changed the intake of Anandians gradually increased.

Duleep Wickremanayake was the first from Ananda to be selected for training in the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, England. In 1951 he was placed first in the Officer Cadets' Examination at the military training school at Sandhurst. He resigned from the Army prematurely as a Colonel to join a British firm constructing the Victoria Dam. Hamilton Wanasinghe, who was sent to Sandhurst in 1954 rose up to be the first Anandian Commander of the Sri Lanka Army and the first to be made a Four Star General. He also served as Secretary of Defence under President Premadasa after retirement from the Army.

CELEBRATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1948

On the 9th of February 1948 Ananda College celebrated the attaining of independence from British rule by holding a national pageant in the open air in the presence of a crowd numbering over 5,000. P. de S. Kularatne was the chief guest. Credit for all the hard work in making the pageant a success belonged to M.E. Fernando and his band of students.

VIEWS ON EDUCATION AND TEACHING OF TAMIL

It was customary for Mettananda to make his ideas about education known to the public and he frequently wrote to the newspapers. At various Annual Prize distributions he spoke of his ideas on several topics. It was as Principal that he submitted a Memorandum to the Official Languages Commission in 1952 titled "Why we need English". It was his view that no language however important was a substitute for the mother tongue.

In this context he recognized the value of English to acquire knowledge in the field of exact science and technology. However, he felt that swabhasha is essential for a good general education. Only after the student has gained mastery of varied language habits connected with swabhasha does he become fit to begin a second language was his contention and he recommended that English be introduced at what was then called the Senior Preparatory and for a period of four years. This would be sufficient to read English books and gather knowledge. He maintained that English would be needed by professionals and for higher studies. It is untrue to say that the adoption of the swabhasha medium will lead to the separation of the races. English was never intended to unite the Sinhalese and Tamils. The most effective method of bringing social unity is by giving every Sinhalese child a working knowledge of Tamil and vice versa. This should be an integral part of the education policy. Mettananda encouraged the Post Senior Students' Tamil Union of Ananda College to develop its activities and appreciated their contribution to the school.



Tamil Union Committee 1946

A NATIONAL FIGURE

As Mettananda's enthusiasm, forthright views on national issues, commitment to the causes he espoused and success at Ananda spread across the country, he became a champion of national reawakening. His public positions on Free Education, swabhasha, teaching of the dhamma in schools, expanding the school curriculum and the unfolding social revolution were embraced by the people. Ananda empowered the non-elite, non-English speaking people of Ceylon by offering them a place to educate their children in English, excel in sports, cadeting and a host of co-curricular activities that built character. It allowed them to study science, enter university, the professions of medicine and engineering, academia and the public service. Mettananda had the foundation laid by Kularatne to build on and he raised Ananda to new heights. People who looked up to Ananda as the embodiment of their values, aspirations and hope venerated Mettananda and he became a highly respected and popular but, at the same time controversial, figure. This aspect of Mettananda is elaborated on later in this chapter.

ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL ISSUES

Mettananda was involved in promoting various causes beneficial to the Buddhists along with others such as P.de S. Kularatne, G.P. Malalasekera and E.W. Adikaram to provide Buddhists with opportunities to take their due place in society.

The local mainstream media that existed in the 1940's were against progressive measures such as Free Education and the introduction of the vernacular as the medium of instruction. The onslaught of the press representing the anglicized 'microscopic minority' was very influential. Those who were national-minded were attacked at every conceivable opportunity. As such, newspaper articles, letters and cartoons, many quite offensive, appeared in the press frequently.

For instance, sections of the press lost no time in ridiculing the school and Mettananda following an OBA dinner at Galle Face Hotel on 8 March, 1952 with a mischievous and completely erroneous cartoon suggesting there was alcohol consumption and dancing. Mettananda was bound by tradition and local culture. No alcoholic drinks were ever served at a school function or an event of the Old Boys. Ballroom dancing was regarded as not in line with the local culture which Ananda stood to protect and Mettananda defended fiercely.



Mettananda emerged as a national spokesman on a wide range of subjects spanning from language policy to education. He fought for the rights of the underprivileged and those who were not in the mainstream of affairs in the country. He was vocal and articulate as well as highly principled and determined. Through his engagement with issues of the people of the newly independent country he emerged as a leader with a large following. He was admired by his supporters and feared by his opponents. National leaders from the Prime Minister downwards listened to his views.



Some in the legislature, including the left leaders who were his students at Ananda, opposed his policies. The newspapers were rife with news items and cartoons depicting the Guru and his disciples at opposing ends. Among the leftists who were critical of some of Mettananda's views were Dr. N.M. Perera, and Bernard Soysa of the LSSP, Philip and Robert Gunawardena of the MEP and Dr. S.A. Wickramasinghe of the Communist Party. All, except for Colvin R. De Silva, were Mettananda's pupils at Ananda.

Mettananda retired as Principal of Ananda on 31st December 1954. The tribute paid by S.A. Wijayatilake to his predecessor in the Principal's report of 1954 is the best testimony of the contribution of Mettananda to Ananda.

"Inheriting in November, 1945, in place of the Ananda where for many years he had laboured, first as an assistant teacher, then as Vice Principal, and later still as Acting Principal, only the smouldering ruins of that Ananda - its war time class rooms burnt down to the ground with all the school furniture, its splendid library (which comprised valuable and substantial portions of the private libraries of Dr. Andreas Nell and of the late Mr. W.A. De Silva) gone up in flames in a way reminiscent of the holocausts of Lanka's Buddhist literature carried out by the Portuguese Conquistadores and by our own Rajasinha I in his heretic zeal, and its staff and student-body cleft asunder by dissension and in an active state of civil war, the Principal slowly but steadily, like some great connoisseur who, picking up the broken fragments of some Grecian urn which a peasant's clumsy spade has smashed into bits, lovingly places fragment beside fragment, gluing them together, until the urn is once more entire, put together the fragments of Ananda until, before very long, the College had not only recovered but surpassed its ancient glory."

Wijayatilake went on further in 1956 –

"His was a very uphill task, for during the War years (1942-1945) the College premises had remained under British Military occupation and the School had to function, perforce, partly at Gampaha and partly at Maharagama in temporary buildings and with a depleted staff and in November 1945, when at last the military authorities had released the College premises, there occurred the fire which wrought such havoc. Heroically, however, Principal Mettananda laboured, piecing together the disrupted fabric and within two or three years he had raised the College to heights unknown before. He evolved order out of chaos, re-established the tone and discipline of the School, and carried out a vigorous campaign for collecting funds for building extensions and improvements. He built the large and splendidly equipped Science block, a large Hostel block, a well-equipped Workshop, and began

work on two large three-storeyed classroom blocks. He also built, up to the damp proof course level, a large Vihara building.”

METTANANDA AS A NATIONAL SPOKESMAN

D.B. Dhanapala, former Editor in Chief of the ‘Lankadeepa’, another product of Ananda, wrote in his book ‘Among Those Present’ about Mettananda along with accounts of five prime ministers, P. De S. Kularatne, Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, Anagarika Dharmapala, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Ediriweera Sarathchandra, Sir Nicholas Attygalle, Philip Gunawardena, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and eight other leading personalities of our land. Mettananda was among the 22 leading men and women that Dhanapala selected as colourful characters who have made an impression on our country. Extracts from his book pithily capture what Mettananda stood for and his multi-faceted character.

“Of course, L.H. Mettananda is a fanatic. Anybody who dares to talk of Buddhists’ rights in a Buddhist country is bound to be called a fanatic bent on disturbing the peace and rousing up religious feelings.

A general amiable amnesia about the inequities perpetrated on the Buddhists and Hindus during the past 400 years will make us gentlemen of tolerance and broadness of outlook.

The Patricians must not be disturbed in their afternoon siesta of complacency by a cacophony of clamouring for the restoration of Buddhists’ rights. For the sake of harmony no word of protest should be voiced lest a nation’s conscience be awakened.

Mettananda’s vitriolic voice should not mar the mysterious march of Christian domination in the Army, the Navy, the Police, the Civil Service and the general administration.

He opens cupboards and shows you skeletons. He parts Catholic curtains and shows you filing cabinets of petitions in modern offices working overtime to bring about acts of God under suspicious circumstances.....

When Bandaranaike was in search of supporters to beat his drum Mettananda moved in with gusto. He organized thousands of Bhikkus to walk from door to door reading choice extracts from the Buddhist Commission’s Report and denouncing the UNP. He carried on a whirlwind campaign throughout the country reviving hopes in the breast of Buddhists and painting Bandaranaike as a new hero born to right wrongs suffered by Buddhists.

In 1956 when Bandaranaike won the General Election he thought Mettananda would get into the spirit of practical politics and be satisfied with the fun he had plus an Ambassadorial job and not bother about his blessed Buddhists anymore. But Mettananda is made of sterner stuff. He spurned efforts to placate him with cushy jobs and spoke out loud and bold once again about the un-redressed grievances of the Buddhists. Bandaranaike turned round and called Mettananda a madman. The man with a load of grievances was only amused. He lost hope and began another search...

He sits in his Nawala house a lone man surrounded by unfulfilled hopes, unsatisfied desires of the majority of this land. But there is iron in his spirit that refuses to waver, to give up the fight.

He is a hermit with a home, a big prophet with a small pension.

His wants are few; his tastes, simple. His smile is benign and reminds me of a grey eminence of intrinsic worth.

In the eyes of the country he is the one honest man we have yet left. He is a power ever to be reckoned with. ...

Once he retired from Ananda, all pent up feelings, unexpressed grievances and bottled up bitterness seems to have made him into quite another man, a kind of reincarnation in the same old body of a new personality alive with character, pulsating with vigour and unreckoning of pace and energy.

.... His humanity keeps his impatience under perfect control.

He knows that four centuries of Christian chronocity cannot be cured by in four years of Buddhist balm.

But the effort is the great thing as far as he is concerned. And one honestly cannot say that his effort has been entirely in vain.”



Mettananda in later years

On the day of his departure from Ananda College as Principal in December 1954, a specially composed song was sung by the Primary School students at a special assembly organized by Messrs G.W. Rajapakse, C.M. Weeraratne, K.S. Perera, G.D. Weerasinghe, K.D. de Lanerolle and M.W. Karunananda. The song was composed by staff-member Mrs Kamala Hemawathie Rajapakse (the wife of G.W. Rajapakse). Mrs Wickramaratne, the Music Teacher of the Primary School provided accompaniment on the piano.

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Ladies and gentlemen of the teaching staff, students and members of the minor staff, and Mettananda himself, were seen wiping away their tears when the song was being sung.

Post Script

METTANANDA AS PRINCIPAL OF DHARMARAJA, KANDY

When he assumed duties as the Principal of Dharmaraja he had to quickly plan to conduct the Golden Jubilee celebrations of his new school on 30 June 1937. A mortgage debt, created when K.F. Billimoria was the Principal for the purchase of a large tract of land amounting to 37 acres, stood at around Rs. 35,000 in 1936. Mettananda had to find a way to prevent this land from being repossessed by the mortgagor for non-settlement of the debt. Raising Rs. 35,000 immediately was beyond the means of the school, its benefactors, parents and well wishers in the general public so the new Principal found a novel solution. The State Mortgage Bank was persuaded to take over the debt and convert it to a low interest loan repayable in monthly instalments. This saved the 37 acres of land but the thirst for funds by this rapidly expanding institution was not quenched. The school required an Assembly Hall, an extension to the play ground, a workshop and improvements to the section of the school located in the town. Mettananda was not overwhelmed by the enormity of the demands. He realized that the enthusiasm of the staff, students and the general public who had been awakened by the nationalist movement and revival of Buddhist education through institutions such as Ananda and Dharmaraja and their unstoppable success were adequate to fulfil those needs. In the Golden Jubilee year, 1937 a Fair was held and with the help of the well-wishers a sum of Rs. 20,380 was collected. With this money a modern building consisting of 12 class rooms was constructed.

The Jubilee celebration was followed by another event called the Kandy Perahera Industries Fair in 1939 intended to collect funds to promote Buddhist education. The proceeds of this fair were divided equally between Dharmaraja College and Mahamaya College, Kandy (started in 1932). At a ceremony held on the second of March 1941, Sir Andrew Caldecott, the Governor of Ceylon, was invited to open the 12-classroom building. On the same day, James Senanayake laid the foundation stone for the two storey Science block. Due to the outbreak of the Second World War people were moving out of Colombo and many students were seeking places at Dharmaraja.

In this period excellent results were obtained by students sitting the London Matriculation and the University Entrance examinations. It also saw the opening of what was called the Elementary Department in the town to cater for the children of low income groups charging very low fees. The classes were held from the kindergarten to the fifth standard. From the sixth standard onwards temporary classrooms were constructed to house the excess demand that was created. Library facilities were made available and excellent performances were recorded in cricket, football, and cadeting. The students were encouraged to help out in the 'grow more food campaign' especially during the period of the war and all types of vegetables and fruits were grown.

Mettananda left Dharmaraja in November 1945 to assume duties at Ananda consequent to the sudden departure of its Principal A.B. Perera.

AFTER RETIREMENT

Mettananda was a prolific writer. He also spoke out on a wide range of topics First it was confined to his pet subject, education. Since leaving Ananda College he involved himself in a number of projects to do with the wellbeing of the country, the Buddhists and the Sinhalese in particular.

In December 1953, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress appointed a committee of eminent persons to look in to the grievances of the Buddhists that persisted even after gaining independence. One of its members was Mettananda. Part of the report relating to education was mainly authored by Mettananda. The report outlined the history of education in the country under foreign domination and its adverse effects, especially on the Buddhists. The Buddhist Commission report as it is known was presented to the public of this country on the 4th of February 1956 at the Ananda College hall. Despite the revelations made in this report making it quite clear that Buddhists were unfairly disadvantaged, the government in power did not commit to do anything to

change the situation. This is considered to have been one of the main reasons for the change of government in 1956.

To put matters in the proper perspective, the Report had the following to say in a chapter titled "Tolerance".

"..... this struggle which the Buddhists must make is NOT a struggle to obtain a favoured position at the expense of other religious groups, however much we may have suffered at their hands in former times. We ask no favours and we expect none. But we do ask for and expect the right to a decent education for our children, the right to save our country from becoming an eastern outpost of the Vatican, the right to be allowed to profess and practise our religion without let or hindrance, material or spiritual, secular or religious"

- From the Buddhist Commission Report (1956)

Mettananda was appointed as a member of the Official Languages Commission to advise on the implementation of the Language Policy of the Government. In this connection he, along with N.D. Wijesekera, another Anandian, visited India to study the progress there. He was also appointed as a member of the Public Performances Board to monitor the content of films shown to the public.

In 1958 he was one of the members of the Antiquities Commission, along with Mr R.L. Brohier (Deputy Surveyor General and President of the Royal Asiatic Society) and Mr Julius de Lanerolle.

In 1960 Mettananda was associated with the Dharma Samajaya party to contest the elections. The aim was to achieve some of his objectives through involvement in politics, but within a short period the party was disbanded.

From the early 1950's the press in Ceylon was dominated and manipulated by a handful of individuals. In the opinion of Mettananda the stance taken by the press moguls was anti-national and as such detrimental to the country. Leaders who were national-minded were ridiculed and attacked for the parts played by them in trying to advocate policies such as Free Education, the place of the Sinhalese language, on local culture etc. Newspapers preached about the unity of the country but every action highlighted divisive tendencies and promoted disharmony and discord amongst the communities. The action of some newspapers resulted in their taking an anti- national and an anti-Buddhist stand.

In 1963, the government of the day contemplated the take-over of all newspapers. A commission of inquiry was set up under the Chairmanship of Justice K.D. de Silva to seek the advice of the feasibility of such a move. Mettananda who was the President of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya, appeared before the Commission. Evidence was given on behalf of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya from the 4th of December 1963 to the 14th of February 1964. The evidence laid before the Commission showed in detail the instances of shortcomings and prejudices specially against the Buddhists. However, the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya in its evidence did not advocate the takeover of all newspapers by the state, simply because the remedy would have been worse than the disease.

In his "POLITICS IN SRILANKA 1947-1979" (2nd Edition - p 46) A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, although not sympathetic, does give credit to Mettananda and others who fought alongside him with documentation and debate to remove the unacceptable barriers placed in the path of Buddhists.-

" The Buddhist leadership during the years after 1956 was more conciliatory in its attitude to the Protestants, especially as the latter had shown a greater willingness to understand the Buddhist position and to accept Parliament's decision in regard to the schools. Being a much smaller group, the Protestants could not possibly have embarked on any other course of action. The Roman Catholics on the other hand were severely criticised by leading Buddhist militants such as L.H. Mettananda, C.D.S. Siriwardene, Gunaseela Vithanage, and T.U. De Silva, among others. These leaders directed their attacks against what they alleged were the workings of 'Catholic Action' in the public and private sectors. 'Catholic Action' they insisted with supporting evidence, was an exclusive mutual benefit organisation and an employment bureau for Roman Catholics. They also condemned the property interests and business activities of the Roman Catholic Church. It is doubtful whether these strictures had the desired effect. Nevertheless it is evident that since 1956, and especially after 1960, important changes have been taking place in the thought processes of members of both

Christian groups. There is greater anxiety to understand the Buddhist viewpoint and to come to terms with it. There has been a shift from the earlier position of complacency and inflexibility.”

Dr. K.D.G.Wimalaratne, former Director , National Archives who delivered the Olcott oration on Mettananda's birth centenary in 1994 had this to say.

“Mettananda was never afraid of telling the truth, never hesitated to criticize wrong actions. This was all done in good faith because of his love for his country. He was a patriotic Sinhala Buddhist leader who greatly influenced the political, social and religious awakening of the nation. He was also an outstanding educationist who deserves an honoured place in Sri Lanka's history. Mettananda would have been immensely happy to see his students take their due places in serving their country with honesty and integrity.

The five significant features of his exemplary life were as follows :

*He did not seek personal gain,
He did not amass unnecessary wealth ,
He did not make irresponsible statements
He safeguarded Democracy
He led a simple life-style.”*

Mettananda passed away on the 1st of November 1967. On an initiative taken by the Ananda College Old Hostellers' Association, the Hostel extension completed and occupied in 1954 was named 'Mettananda Mandiraya', as a mark of gratitude to this great Principal. The naming ceremony was held on 26th July 1992.

(For more details please visit the dedicated website - <http://www.lhmettananda.com/>)