

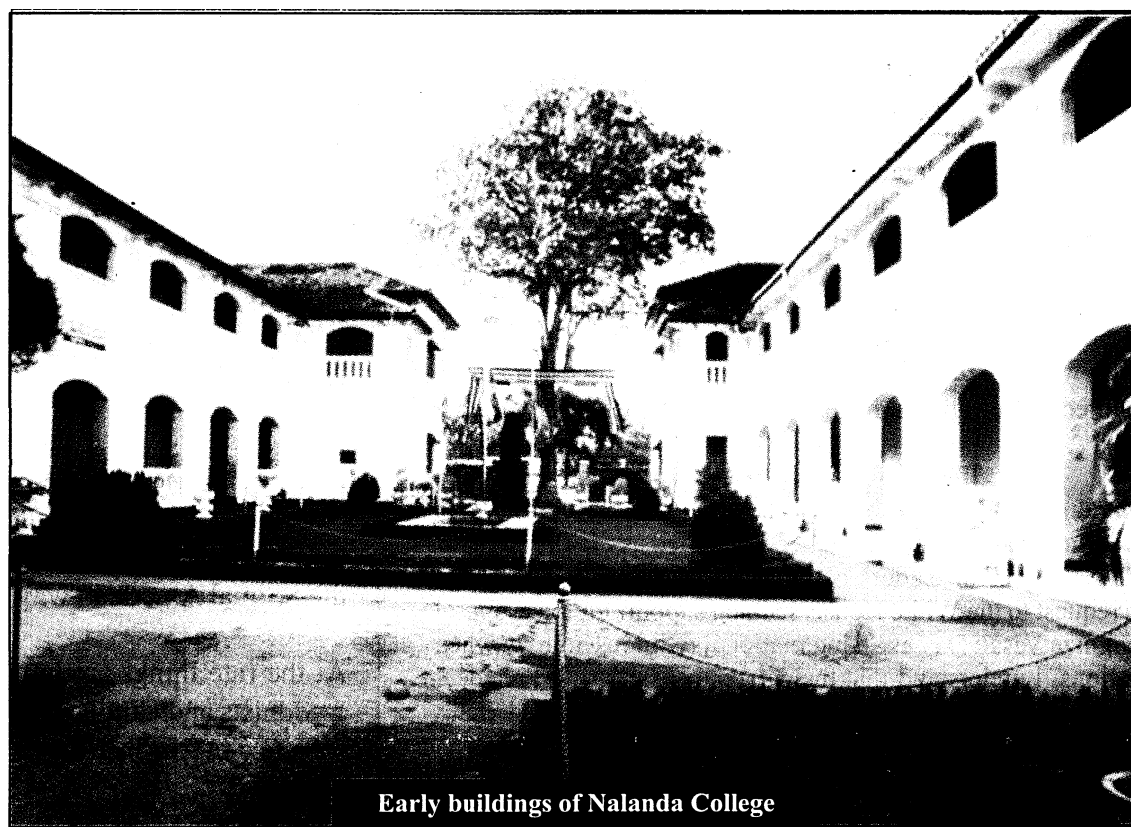
Nalanda Celebrates 80 Years

The great awakening of the Buddhists that followed the famous Panadura Waadaya highlighted the need for a Buddhist education system. Although there were few Buddhist schools started by Ven. Dodanduwe Piyaratana Thera and several other members of the Sangha, they lacked the amenities and facilities that were available to the missionary schools. Col. Henry Steel Olcott was among those who encouraged the setting up of a Buddhist education system.

Neither in number of schools, nor in the number of students, the Buddhist schools could match the missionary schools which had the patronage of the imperialist government. As early as 1834, whilst there were only 15 government schools, there were 289 missionary schools. In 1840, 100 Tamil schools and 8 English schools had been established in the Tamil area by the American missionaries. As late as 1880, there were only four Buddhist English schools with a student population of about 250 whilst the number of Christian schools with a student population of 78,000 was 805.

The lack of funds was the main constraint in opening up Buddhist educational institutes for the benefit of Buddhist children. Furthermore, Buddhists were not well organized. It was under these circumstances that the Buddhist Theosophical Society was started in 1880 to overcome this situation. Along with the publication of the Buddhist Sinhala newspaper *Sarasavi Sandarasa*, the Buddhist education fund was inaugurated in 1881. The imperial government and the missionaries who were not happy with these developments were bent in creating numerous obstacles to stall the Buddhist build up.

However, the then Buddhist leaders among whom were Venerables Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, Rathmalane Sri Dammaloka, Vaskaduwe Sri Subuthi, Miguttuwatte Gunananda Theras, Mr. Don Amar De Silva, Pandit Batuwanthudawe, Mr. Don Carolis Hewavitharana, Mr. Jeramias Dias and Anagarika Dharmapala provided valuable advice and financial contributions to make the Buddhist education system a reality. New English and vernacular Buddhist schools came to be opened up in various parts of the country. Among these schools were Ananda College Colombo, Dharmaraja College Kandy, Mahinda College Galle,



Early buildings of Nalanda College

Vijaya College Matale, Jinaraja College Gampola.

Guidance of great patriots

The then Principal of Ananda College, Mr. P. De S. Kularatne, started the Ananda primary section on the 1st January 1923 at Campbell Place, Colombo. This came to be established as Nalanda College on the 39th anniversary day of Ananda College. The most significant aspect for Nalanda College to become so unique was the connections that it had with the great patriotic Buddhist leaders and Buddhist educators. The founder of Nalanda, Mr. P. de S. Kularatne, who was the principal of Ananda College at the time, had the vision in bringing up the new college to the level of Ananda. Mr. L.H. Mettananda who had been one of the brilliant teachers at Ananda was sent to Nalanda. He was accompanied by 330 bright students.

Prof. Malalasekara after his return from England, became Nalanda's first Principal. Mr. J. N. Jitendradasa who became the Principal in 1928, was keen on arts, and improved the arts section of the school. During this time, the Tibetan poet monk Ven. S Mahinda Thera and the great dramatist Dr. Panibharata were on the staff.

During the time of the second world war, a section of Nalanda was taken to Minuwangoda and another section to Maharagama. After the war, the section at Minuwangoda was registered as an independent Nalanda College. By 1939, Nalanda Cadet Corps was able to win the Herman Loose Cup eight times. This achievement was a unique one which no other college could achieve to date.

Eminent Principals, teachers & Students

In 1947 Mr. U.D.C. Loris, one of the most devoted Buddhists became the Principal of the College and was succeeded by Mr. M.W. Karunananda as the Principal. He was able to bring the school to a higher level in education. It was he who challenged that science education could be done in Sinhala when there was a big public debate over science education in Swabhasha. During that period, Ven. Heenatiyana Dammaloka Thera as the chief advisor and Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne were in charge of the Social Service Society. The Shramadana campaign which was started by him with the Nalanda students in Kanatoluwa village marked the beginning of the Sarvodaya movement. After Vidyodaya Pirivena was granted university status and moved to Maligakanda, a request was made seeking permission to use Nalanda buildings to conduct Pirivena classes. Mr. Karunananda readily agreed to this request and permitted the chief incumbent Ven. Kalukondayawe Pagnasekara Thera to hold classes for Pirivena students at the college premises. The help given by Nalanda to develop Buddhist education was indeed highly appreciated.

Mr. Gunapala Wickramaratne who served as Principal from 1964 to 1969 deserves special credit for reviving the school after a temporary period of decline. Nalanda had one of its golden periods during the time of Mr. Sugunadasa Atukorala. Hon. I.M.R.A. Irriyagolla who was the Minister of Education at that time helped immensely for its development. He was one of the

first students to join Nalanda from Ananda. Most of the buildings at Nalanda that could be seen at present were constructed by Mr. Sugunadasa Atukorala. Not only in education, but also in sports, he raised the school to a high standard.

Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe who became the Principal in 1982 served for a long period. The first school language laboratory in Sri Lanka was started during his period in 1990. Mr. D. G. Sumanasekara's service was short but praiseworthy. He initiated the old boys felicitating programme as well as Nalanda War Heroes' Day. It was he who set up the first school archives in the country. In 1999,

the present Principal Mr. Hemanta Prematilake was responsible for the modern sports pavilion, a swimming pool and a sports complex. "Old Nalandians' Buddhist Association" was started this year, and its present Chief Adviser Ven. Kuppiyawatte Bodhananda Thera's efforts in rehabilitating the drug addicts have brought great relief and solace to them.

Among the Dhamma teachers at Nalanda were the Venerables Balangada Ananda Maithriya, Polwatte Buddhadatta, Kirulapana Wimala, Hinatiyana Dammaloka, Gintota Bharadvaja, Dr. Paravahera Vajiragnana, S. Mahinda, Kalalalle Ananda Sagara, Devundara Wacheeswara, Narada of Vajiraramaya and Hettimulle Vajirbuddhi Theras.

There are eminent old boys of Nalanda who serve in different capacities in different parts of the world. Among those who had brought honour to the country were politicians, soldiers, artists, scientists and sportsmen. Mr. U.A.S. Perera (Siri Aiya) and Mr. Henry Jayasena and the present Prime Minister Hon Mahinda Rajapaksha are among them.

When Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maithreya Thera gave the name "Nalanda" to the college he had in his mind the famous University of "Nalanda" that existed in India, one of the first universities in the world. This famous seat of education in India was destroyed by the Moguls. We the Buddhists in this little island of ours should be vigilant to prevent such things happening again.

Pani Wewala

Movie stars Tina Turner, Richard Gere, Los Angeles Lakers coach Phil Jackson, Italian soccer star Roberto Baggio are among the celebrities who had embraced Buddhism. Lopez is the latest.

Richard Gere inspires Jennifer Lopez to embrace Buddhism ANI, Oct 8, 2004

London, UK — Celebrities seem to have a strange fascination for Asian religions, and if it was George Harrison becoming a disciple of the Hindu guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Madonna practicing the Jewish religion kabalah, this time it is Latino diva Jennifer Lopez who is taking up Buddhism.

The 'Wedding Planner' actress was reportedly so impressed by her co-star Richard Gere's dedication to Buddhism, that she was inspired to embrace the religion after she had a number of spiritual talks with him, reports the Sun.

Lopez, who is acting with Gere in the movie 'Shall We Dance' says that she is now aware of a higher energy, and the fact that it is very important to be a good human being.

"Now I know there's a force in the world. There's an energy that if you put out good and you put out love it comes back to you. That's a basic thing that works for me," the report quoted her as saying.

Courtesy: BNN