

DHARMA VIJAYA

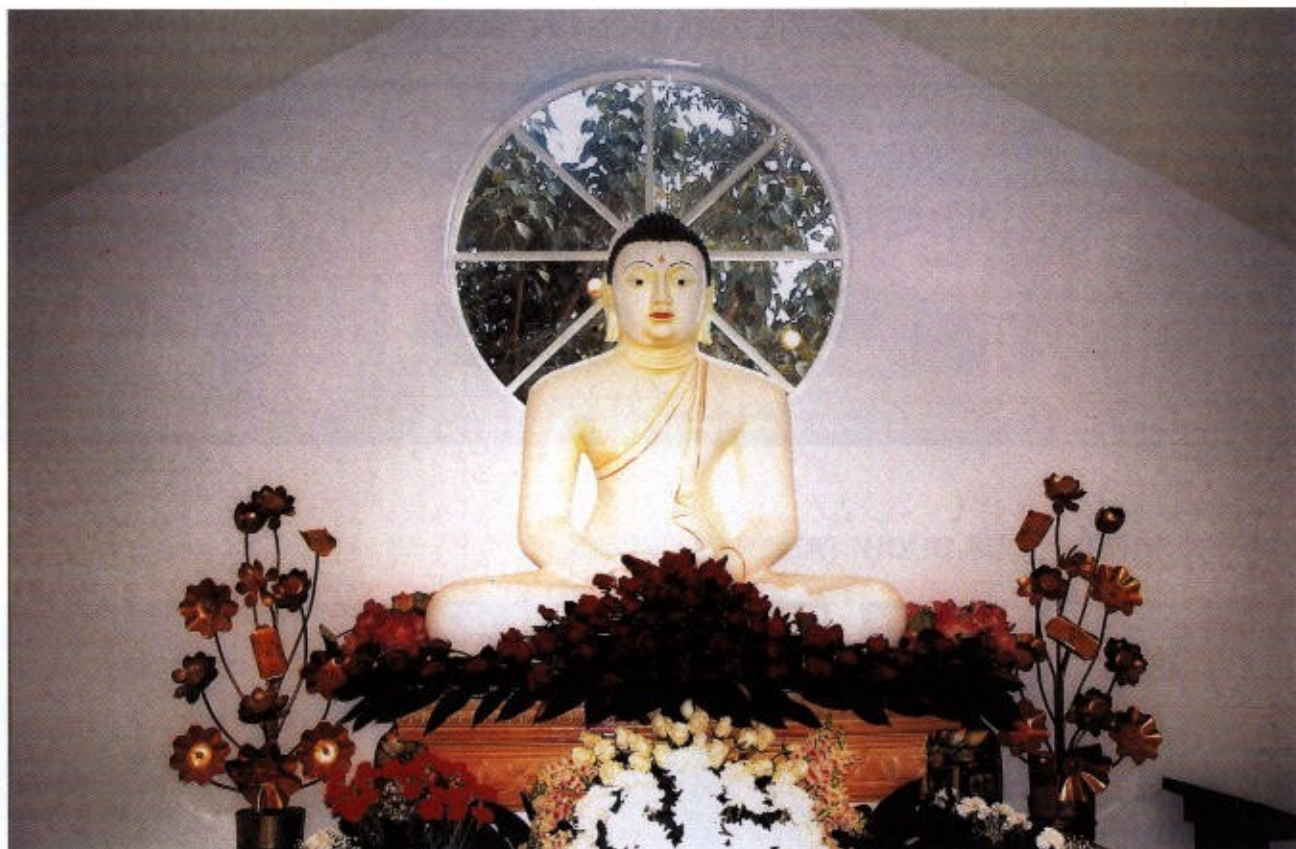
DHARMA VIJAYA BUDDHIST VIHARA SILVER JUBILEE
1980 - 2005



GOLDEN JUBILEE OF ORDINATION
BHANTE WALPOLA PIYANANDA
1955 - 2005

DHARMA VIJAYA

Special Edition of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, Los Angeles



October 2005 CE

VAP 2549 BE

Anniversary Issue

DHARMA VIJAYA BUDDHIST VIHARA

WE HAVE GROWN...

FROM A SMALL HOUSE ON

12TH STREET



TO OUR PRESENT LOCATION ON CRENSHAW BOULEVARD.



FROM A SAPLING OUR BODHI TREE HAS GROWN



TO A TWENTY FOOT TREE
NEXT TO A MEDITATION HALL.

DHARMA VIJAYA

Anniversary Issue 2005

Editors

Bodhicari Dharmajiva
(Stan Levinson)

Bodhicari Cintamani
(Cynthia Shimazu)

1847 Crenshaw Blvd.,
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Tel: (323) 737-5084
Fax: (323) 737-7915

www.dharmavijaya.org
email: dharma@dharmavijaya.com



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A publication of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, September 2005

Dharma Vijaya's 25 years: An Overview

By Bodhicari Dharmajiva

Introduction

On July 4, 1976, Ven. Walpola Piyananda, a Sri Lankan monk around 30 years of age, arrived right in the midst of the Bicentennial Celebration in San Francisco – a seemingly auspicious arrival date. On December 25, 1976, owing to, as he wrote in the celebration of Dharma Vijaya's 10th anniversary, his ignorance of American geography and climate, he arrived in Chicago dressed only in his traditional robes and sandals. Fortunately, things have gone much better since then!

Quite a bit better. In fact, this volume is a tribute to two remarkable milestones that seem to fall together by chance, but which in fact are intimately tied together: the 25th Anniversary of the Founding of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara and the 50th Anniversary of Ven. Piyananda's ordination as a Buddhist monk. Certainly without Bhante, as we know him, there would be no Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara.

Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara and Ven. Piyananda: you'll read elsewhere in this volume Ven. Piyananda's biography, so we'll just explain the first. Seems fairly simple: a 'vihara' is the Sri Lankan term for a Buddhist temple. "Buddhist" is something which goes back to the teachings of the Sakyan Sage of Northern India, Siddhartha Gautama, born a royal prince about 2500 years ago. "Vijaya" is victory, in this case the victory of "Dharma". "Dharma" – definitely the key word here – has a multitude of shades of meaning: it's Truth (with a capital "T"), it's Reality, it's the Teachings of the Buddha, and it's "Things As They Are" (this writer's preferred explanation).

So this is the place where Reality, the Way Things Really Are, the Teachings of the Buddha, reign triumphant. They reign over sectarianism, over pettiness, over obsession with the transient facts of life, over uncontrolled passion, over anger, and over ignorance. Yes, at 1847 Crenshaw Blvd., Los

Angeles, CA 90019, the Truth comes first. And it is freely shared, imparted to the serious seeker or the merely curious. Plus those Sangha members here, resident Buddhist monks, who live according to this understanding of Truth, demonstrate it in everyday life, sharing their loving-kindness, their compassion, their joy, and their equanimity, with everyone they meet.

The Path to Dharma Vijaya

Dharma Vijaya is a really good name, an optimistic name, a reassuring name. However, for those of us around here since the late 1970's, it gives off just a hint of why we needed to remind ourselves of Truth, of the time between Bhante's sartorial gaffe in Chicago and the Triumph of Dharma Vijaya. We don't want to dwell on the negative when there is so much positive. But in order to give some context to all the wonderful accomplishments of this Vihara and its Abbot, it helps to have just a brief exposition of that part of the Truth.

In November 1978, Ven. Dr. Pannila Ananda, Ven. Piyananda's very close friend and currently the Chief Abbot of Attanagalla Royal Vihara in Sri Lanka, moved into a house with him which came to be known as the Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara, at the invitation of a group of Sri Lankan laypeople who had purchased it. They had formed a lay Buddhist society a few years earlier, and were happy to get two young, educated monks to provide religious services.

Unfortunately, that lay group had a rather unusual idea of how to run a Buddhist temple, operating it as a kind of business organization with the venerable monks as employees, rather than as the leaders. Aside from this being totally at odds with Sri Lankan tradition, it resulted in some very unbuddhist actions which Ven. Piyananda criticized. They drafted a resolution that only Sri Lankan Buddhists could belong to the

vihara, not the many Thai, Cambodian, and Lao who were eager to come to this rare Theravada Buddhist temple in Los Angeles.

Things finally came to a head, with the monks ostracized by many of the members of the controlling group, and finally they were actually thrown out, taking only their meager personal possessions. Fortunately, a group of Sri Lankans headed by community leader, Dr. Gamini Jayasinghe, continued to support the monks. Dr. Jayasinghe has continued to be Dharma Vijaya's best friend up to the present day.

Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara Maha Thera, who had come to mediate and who later was to become the Chief Patron of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, was invited to stay at a tiny Lao temple under the leadership of Ven. Khampiro, while Ven. Piyananda and Ven. Ananda stayed at the International Buddhist Meditation Center, led by the pioneering Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Ven. Dr. Thich Thien An. Many are the people, especially American devotees, who came to practice Buddhism as a result of contact with Ven. Thien An (including the writer of this article).

With the support of the Sangha as well as those Sri Lankan (and other) community members who were equally revolted by the actions of the organizers of L.A. Buddhist Vihara, Ven. Piyananda and Ven. Ananda were able to rent a house at 2560 W. 12th Street between Vermont and Normandie, moving in and inaugurating Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara on April 20, 1980. This was the beginning of Dharma Vijaya and the Triumph of Truth. Less than two years later, with the help of American monk Ven. Suhitadhamma, they were able to find the current location, purchasing the property and moving in to stay in January of 1982. The rest of this story is the happy part, so read on.

Founding of Sri Lankan Temples

One of the proudest achievements of Ven. Piyananda and Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara has been the establishment of Theravada temples of the Sri Lankan

tradition across the United States. Ven. Piyananda has been fortunate to enjoy the support of a wonderful, generous Sri Lankan lady named Shani Wijay, who pledged to start one temple per year, each in a different state.

The first temple Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara was able to found was its "sister" temple the Houston Buddhist Vihara, under the abbotship of Dharma Vijaya's own Ven. Pannila Ananda. Ven. Kamburagalle Nanda took care of the temple for a while and now it is run by Ven. Dr. Basnagoda Rahula. The Houston Buddhist Vihara has been a great success since its founding in 1988, attracting Theravada Buddhists of all traditions as well as other Buddhists and interested Americans. Dr. Bandula and Shani Wijay donated the house for this temple. Later additional land was purchased and given to the temple by Mr. Upali Weerasuriya and the first traditional Sri Lanka temple was built in America.

Ms. Shani Wijay soon began opening temples nationwide. At Venerables Piyananda, Ananda and Nanda's request, she donated a temple to Ven. K. Wipulasara, who came to America and was trained by Ven. Madewala Seelawimala in Berkeley. We are fortunate to have Ven. Seelawimala on the board of directors at Dharma Vijaya. This temple was established in Tampa as the Florida Buddhist Vihara.

Later, Ven. Paramahara Wajirabuddhi wanted to start a temple in Georgia. Ven. Piyananda again recommended Ven. Wajirabuddhi to Ms. Wijay, and she agreed to purchase the house to start the Georgia Buddhist temple and donated it to the Sangha members. Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara is indirectly involved with these temples. They are not formally part of Dharma Vijaya, but Ven. Piyananda sits on the board of directors of both the Georgia and the Florida Buddhist Vihara. This is a stipulation of Ms. Wijay for all temples she donates.

One of our temple assistants for over five years was the very capable Ven. Alawala Subhuthi. At Ven. Piyananda's request, Ms. Wijay agreed to purchase property in Las Vegas to start the Nevada Buddhist Vihara,

ASSOCIATE TEMPLES



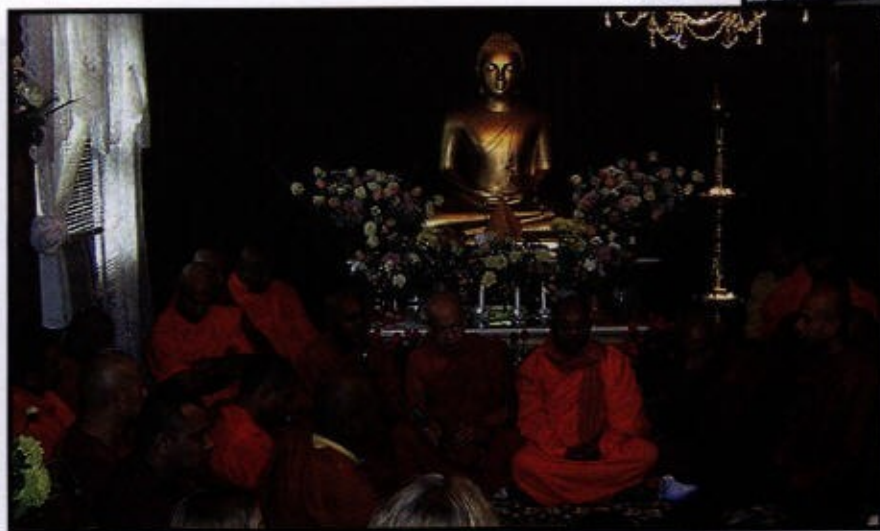
HOUSTON BUDDHIST VIHARA - 1988



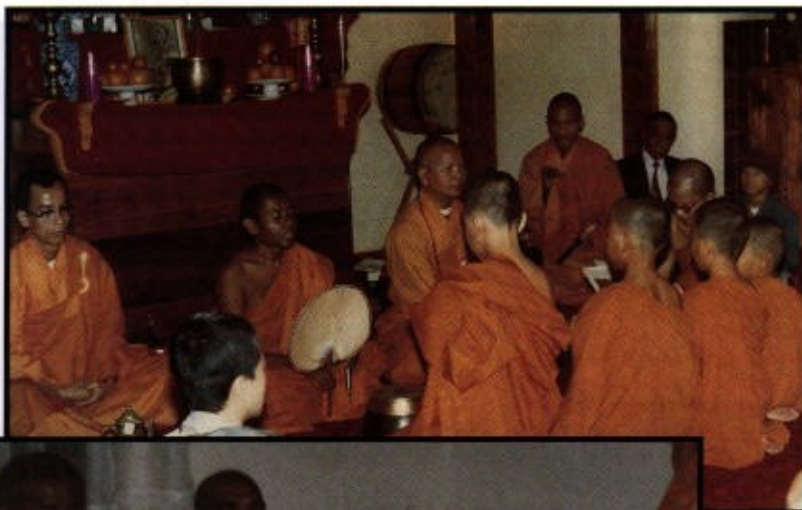
NEVADA BUDDHIST VIHARA - 1998



SAMBUDDHALOKA BUDDHIST VIHARA
IN MORENO VALLEY, CA - 2003



OHIO BUDDHIST VIHARA - 2003



ORDINATION OF MONKS

Whoever is master
of their own Nature,
Bright, clear and true,
They may indeed wear the yellow robe.

Dhammapada



with Ven. Subhuthi as abbot. This temple has been a great success, especially with the tremendous population growth of Las Vegas the past decade or so.

The next temple Ms. Wijay offered was for another very capable and experienced Dharma Vijaya assistant monk, Ven. Koppakande Sumanajothi. This is the Ohio Buddhist Vihara in Cincinnati, Ohio. Ven. Sumanajothi has organized a very full schedule of activities for this Vihara, as anyone who gets on his email list can testify. Both Nevada and Ohio Viharas are directly under the guidance of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, as they were founded by monks who were trained at Dharma Vijaya. Ven. Piyananda took the monks to the new sites, introduced them to the dayaka sabha, and had Ms. Wijay purchase the temple property.

Another more recent founding was the Portland Vihara. This was purchased at Ven. Piyananda's request and Ven. Pallegage Chandasiri Nayaka Thera was named abbot. In this case, Dharma Vijaya doesn't directly guide this temple, but Ven. Piyananda is a board member.

Sambuddhaloka Buddhist Vihara in Moreno Valley, CA was founded with the support of Dharma Vijaya and its lay members in the community and is also directly under the guidance of DVBV. It is under the abbotship of Ven. Watogala Saranasiri, who served an apprenticeship of several years at Dharma Vijaya, and then requested the opportunity to have his own temple.

Aside from the official founding of temples under the guidance of Ven. Piyananda, Dharma Vijaya has been instrumental in the establishment of other Sri Lankan temples around the U.S. When the New York Buddhist Vihara was founded in 1980, our Ven. Pannila Ananda accompanied Ven. Galaboda Gnanissara Nayake Maha Thera there to help him get started. Dharma Vijaya continued to support this Vihara indirectly.

When Ven. Katugastota Uparatana Nayake Maha Thera started the Maryland Vihara, Dharma Vijaya was able to help. Ven. Dr.

Ratanasara and Ven. Piyananda were the first to encourage Ven. Uparatana to open this temple. In fact, Ven. Uparatana originally came to the U.S. at the invitation of Dharma Vijaya, which helped him get his permanent legal status in this country.

When Ven. Dr. Henepola Gunaratana Nayake Maha Thera started the Bhavana Society in West Virginia, Ven. Piyananda recommended the well-known American meditation monk Ven. Yogavacara Rahula to him. This temple has been instrumental in spreading the teaching of meditation as well as in supporting the reestablishment of the Bhikkhuni order (see elsewhere in this article).

Another very skillful and remarkable monk, Ven. Himbunne Kondanna, stayed at Dharma Vijaya when he first came to this country, and received some training at Dharma Vijaya. He moved to the New York Vihara as assistant to the well-known Ven. Kurunagoda Piyatissa Nayaka Maha Thera, and later founded his own temple, the Staten Island Buddhist Vihara in New York. He has also worked to organize an additional center in Chicago.

When we speak of Sri Lankan temples in the United States, most are associated in one way or another with Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara.

Helping with Founding other Temples

When Ven. Piyananda arrived in this country in 1976, there were no Lao or Cambodian temples. So when L.A. Buddhist Vihara started in 1978, the first temple in Hollywood, many in the Lao and Cambodian immigrant communities went there. They of course wanted their own centers which reflected their own particular cultural traditions, as was natural. An important Cambodian community leader, the late Dr. Sok Thay, Mr. David V. Kreng and Ven. Piyananda, together with other Cambodians as well as Mr. John Phelan, a Episcopalian minister with experience in Asia, joined together to start a temple and find a monk to run it. They found Ven. Konchin, at that

time living in India. He lived with our Sri Lankan monks at first, then started the Lakewood temple, and has been successful for years in the Lakewood and Long Beach areas, the most important center of Cambodians in Southern California.

In 1979, when Ven. Piyananda was visiting Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand, he happened to meet a very famous Cambodian monk, who was then living in Bangkok. This was Ven. Maha Ghosananda, who Ven. Piyananda jointly with Mr. Leo of Ambassador College sponsored to come to this country, where he became an important leader of Cambodians.

The Lao community also sorely felt the need to start a temple observant of its community traditions. One of the community leaders, Wilay, plus a Thai man named Sawat Yinwad and Ven. Piyananda got together to try to solve this problem. At that time there was a Lao monk, Ven. Bunchan, living in Galle, Sri Lanka at Vidyloka Pirivena. Ven. Piyananda invited him here and convinced Ven. Dr. Thich Thien An to sponsor him. Together they got him started in a temple in San Diego, where he was abbot for a while. Unfortunately, while Ven. Bunchan was Lao, he had been living in Sri Lanka since childhood, and couldn't really meet the cultural needs of the Lao Community. Eventually he invited another monk from Laos to handle the temple and he left.

Meanwhile, Sawat and Ven. Piyananda learned that there was a distinguished Lao monk living in Texas, Ven. Khampiro. They invited him to L.A. where he started a new Lao temple, later moving to San Bernardino. This is the same Ven. Khampiro we spoke of above in the founding of Dharma Vijaya. He gave refuge to our Sri Lankan monks at a difficult time in their lives in America. Ven. Khampiro was very successful in helping his community up until his death several years ago.

Dharma Vijaya is proud to have been able to help the Lao and Cambodian communities. They were mostly victims of the war in Southeast Asia, and many came here as refugees, having to leave everything reluctantly behind in their homelands.

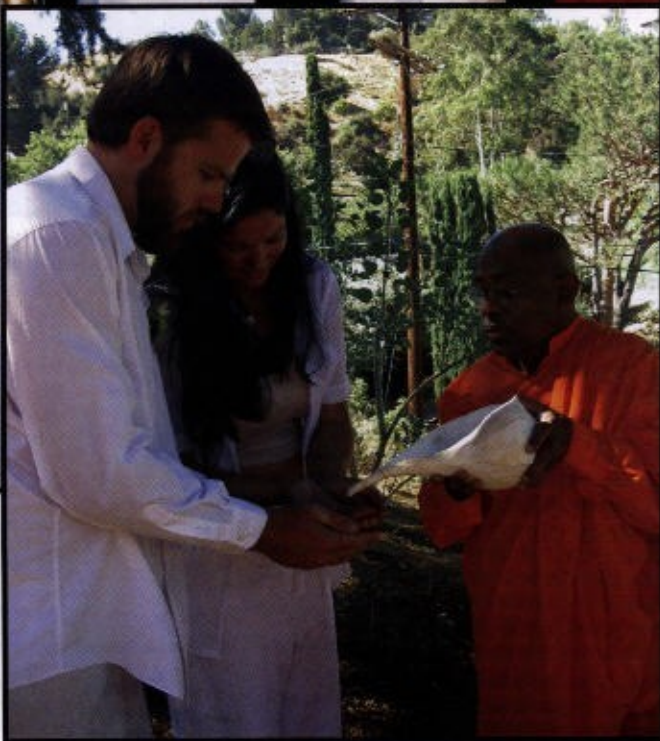
Making Buddhism Relevant in America

Ven. Piyananda, Ven. Ananda, and Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara recognize that while the truth of the Buddha's teachings is timeless, the techniques and customs are often very culture bound to a South and Southeast Asian way of life and to the long-standing traditions of specific South and Southeast Asian countries. Ven. Piyananda has always felt that it behooved him to promote Buddha's teachings using approaches and techniques that make a connection with people living in 20th and now 21st century America.

One interesting approach has been the use of music. Traditional Theravada Buddhism includes much chanting, but not music. Ven. Piyananda got together with some American friends and produced a CD using Pali chanting over music. This included the participation of our Sangha members, Ven. Piyatissa abbot of the New York Vihara, Ven. Seelawimala, and the late Rahula Sariputra a famous Indian musician. While some of our traditional community members were not very receptive to this approach, it has been successful with Americans and with the younger generation.

Friends of Ven. Piyananda, the American singer Holly Fischer and her husband, composer Phil Kanakis, made a CD of Pali chanting accompanied by music. Ven. Piyananda taught Holly how to chant. The result was the CD "Sacred Circles: In the Company of Monks." In a similar vein, Ven. Piyananda collaborated with Cynthia Shimazu (Bodhicari Cintamani) to produce a loving-kindness CD with a musical background composed by Phil. Music has been a very important tool in helping Americans feel comfortable with the presentation of Buddhism, without changing the teachings or the message.

Ven. Piyananda worked with the Sangha of the temple to find some new traditions for all our members to help them feel that Buddhism was relevant to significant life events in America. For example, using the Sigalovada Sutta, Ven. Piyananda devised a new Buddhist ceremonial system, including the development of a Buddhist marriage



American Buddhist Weddings

Buddhist Ministry in America

Developed in America to insure the flowering of the Buddhadhamma here, the Sangha of Dharma Vijaya has established Buddhist Minister ordinations.



Dhammacari Initiation and
Bodhicari Ordination



Dhammacari Initiation



Dhammacari Initiation and Bodhicari Ordination



Bodhicari

Bodhicari Dharmajiva	Stan Levinson
Bodhicari Vajira	Heidi Singh
Bodhicari Chintana	Chintana Lintong
Bodhicari Sanghamitta	Ramya Gunasekera
Bodhicari Dhammamitta	Chutima Vucharatawintar
Bodhicari Sama	Dede Whiteside
Bodhicari Khema	Carol Lawrence
Bodhicari Bodhi	Dr. Eric Berg
Bodhicari Dharmapala	Stephen Long
Bodhicari Cintamani	Cynthia Shimazu
Bodhicari Mudita	Dr. Jule Biesiada

ceremony. Many Americans have been married with this ceremony since 1983. Many have come back to renew their vows, and remain close to the temple.

Ven. Piyananda and the Sangha of Dharma Vijaya approached their own Sri Lankan community to devise an original Sri Lankan wedding ceremony here in the United States. Some of our temple members were very critical of these non-traditional efforts and expressed themselves strongly against them. Fortunately, with the help of well known Buddhist scholar Dr. Ananda Guruge, their objections were overcome, and in time the Sri Lankan community has begun to embrace these ceremonies as a unique way to feel a connection with its ancestral land. In fact, Dharma Vijaya's own Dr. Gamini Jayasinghe supported this from its inception, and his daughter, the first Sunday school student of Dharma Vijaya and now Dr. Amali Jayasinghe, was married with this ceremony.

Training New Leaders

Part of trying to keep Buddhism fresh and relevant for new cultures is finding and developing new leaders from these new cultures. Identifying suitable and interested candidates to receive full ordination as Theravadan monks is not easy in this culture. One great success story has been Ven. Yogavacara Rahula. As mentioned above, he is deputy abbot of the West Virginia Bhavana Society, a meditation center. Ven. Rahula is one of the foremost American meditation teachers. In 1979, he was interested in full ordination, after having received his samanera (novice) ordination years before in Sri Lanka, where he also trained. As there was no Sri Lankan temple in 1979 with Sangha to ordain him, Ven. Piyananda approached Wat Thai, and acted as his instructor for the ordination, along with Ven. Ananda, Ven. Seelawimala; Ven. U Dhammaratana was his teacher, and Ven. Jinaratana was the preceptor. All Dharma Vijaya was proud to have him ordained there as a fully ordained monk.

Another friend, who was a Mahayana monk at the time, and who you heard about

earlier, is Venerable Suhitadhamma. He had expressed interest in becoming a Theravada monk. His teacher at the time was Ven. Piyananda's good friend, the aforementioned Ven. Dr. Thich Thien An, a Mahayana monk in the Vietnamese tradition, who helped Ven. Piyananda get established in this country. Ven. Thien An graciously gave his permission for Suhita to receive the ordination, and in 1980, Dharma Vijaya, including Ven. Ananda and Ven. Piyananda, ordained Ven. Suhita.

Still, these successful stories are not as common as we might hope. When Ven. Piyananda arrived in the U.S. in 1976, he met a very nice man who wanted to become a monk. As Ven. Piyananda had no temple, he sent him to Wat Thai, and later sent him to Thailand to practice. He spent over 20 years as a monk, but eventually gave up robes. It is truly not easy to become a bhikkhu in America.

In time it occurred to Bhante that the best way to establish Buddhism here with native teachers was to develop a new system to supplement, not replace, the traditional system. It would be somewhat similar to a system of lay ministers that was developed by Venerable Sangharakkhita in Europe. In consultation with Ven. Dr. Ratanasara and Ven. Lenagala Sumedhananda Maha Nayaka and the support of Ven. Madewala Punjabi Ven. Piyananda and Ven. Ananda were able to develop a three-step system of lay ordination.

First, anyone who takes five precepts and is initiated into Buddhism is called an Upasaka. He or she is expected to follow a specific study program and practice meditation. After practicing for two years and showing development, he or she can advance to the level of Dhammacari.

The Dhammacari follows 9 precepts, and follows a more advanced syllabus of study. He or she is qualified to teach Sunday school and start meditation classes, but is not considered a fully ordained minister. The Dhammacari is basically a lay religious teacher.

Finally, after a few more years of study and practice, those so inclined can apply for the

level of Bodhicari, who follows 12 precepts. He or she is a fully ordained lay minister, on the level of, say, a Japanese Jodo Shinshu or a Methodist minister. He or she can perform many religious ceremonies and activities, yet remains a lay person. Dharma Vijaya also has a Brahmacari initiation for those so inclined.

A recent innovation of Dharma Vijaya is the Dhammashakti initiation. This is a kind of coming-of-age recognition of teenagers just turning 13, who are trained and recognized as fully practicing Buddhists. This has been a popular vehicle to help the children of Buddhists find a focus for their religious yearnings.

Revival of the Bhikkhuni Order

A great point of pride for Ven. Piyananda personally has been the effort to re-establish the Bhikkhuni order in the Theravada tradition. He had been advocating on behalf of women's full ordination since the early 60's. In 1979 he sent a letter to the Chief Abbot of Fo Kuang Shan in Taiwan to allow some Sri Lankan Dasasilmata, not even recognized as samaneris (novices) in Sri Lanka, to be able to train for full ordination. Unfortunately, it didn't work out at that time.

However, thanks to the combined efforts of Ven. Piyananda and Dharma Vijaya's Chief Patron, Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara, this situation was to change. Ven. Ratanasara came to this country as a very senior monk, and at first was very traditional. In fact, he was horrified when women in this country wanted to shake his hand. However, he was a brilliant man and quickly understood the reality of this country, and began to see the wisdom of fixing a system that in one way had been broken for centuries, since the bhikkhuni order died out in ancient times.

In the mid-80's, Ven. Ratanasara, Ven. Piyananda, Ven. Ananda, and other Sangha members ordained a Thai lady, Chutima, as the first samaneri. There was tremendous opposition by many Sri Lankan members and even some senior monks like the distinguished Ven. Dr. Ellawela Nandissara,

who were living at Dharma Vijaya at the time. Yet persistence won out.

Ven. Piyananda also encouraged Venerable Gunaratana's ordination of samaneris in West Virginia, himself participating in several of the ordinations.

Another step was made when the Venerable Mapalagama Wipulasara joined their cause. A respected artist and monk, the General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society, Ven. Wipulasara was able to join with Venerable Piyananda and other Sangha members to ordain 10 Sri Lankan Dasasilmatas as bhikkhunis, including the now famous Venerable Kusuma, formerly Dr. Kusuma Devindra, a distinguished Buddhist scholar. This was in Saranath, India, where the Buddha gave his first sermon. Joining with Korean nuns, the monks ordained 10 Theravada bhikkhunis for the first time in eleven hundred years. Previously only some had become samaneris.

Aside from Ven. Piyananda and the others mentioned, the late Venerable Talalle Dhammaloka Maha Thera also started bhikkhuni ordinations in his temple in Sri Lanka, where Venerable Piyananda was on the advisory board. Another distinguished monk, Venerable Inamaluwe Sumangala, abbot of the Royal Dambula Cave Temple has also established a bhikkhuni training center and has ordained them. Venerable Piyananda is also on his advisory board.

A Thai, Prem Suksawat, a psychiatrist and PhD, wanted to become a bhikkhuni. Ven. Mettanando, a Thai monk, referred her to Ven. Piyananda, sending her here in 1999. She became a samaneri at Dharma Vijaya, despite protests from some in the local Thai community. She later wanted higher ordination. Venerable Kondanna supported her efforts and trained her in Boston, and subsequently Venerable Piyananda arranged for her to go to Fo Kuang Shan temple in Taiwan to receive full ordination. Venerable Gunaratana and Venerable Kondanna and other Theravada monks joined in the ceremony. Her name is Venerable Gotami and she has started a meditation center in Boston.

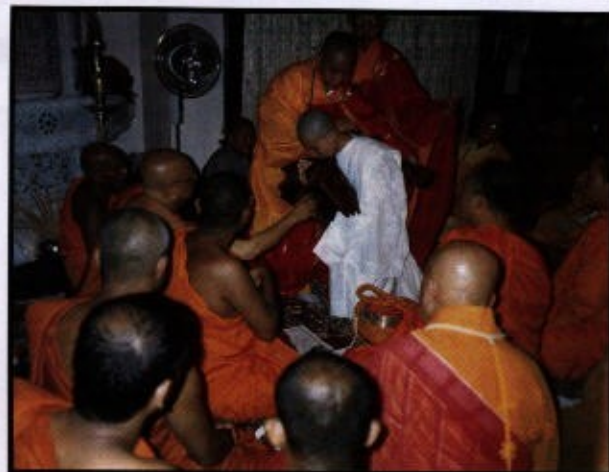
THERAVADAN ORDINATION OF NUNS



**A striver-on-the-path shall
overcome....**



**After many centuries the tradition of
Theravadan nuns is finally revived.
The first Bhikkhuni ordination was in Saranath,
India on December 5, 1996.**



**The striver-on-the-path shall
bring to perfection
the well-taught path of wisdom,**

**as an expert garland-maker
would a floral design.**

Dhammapada



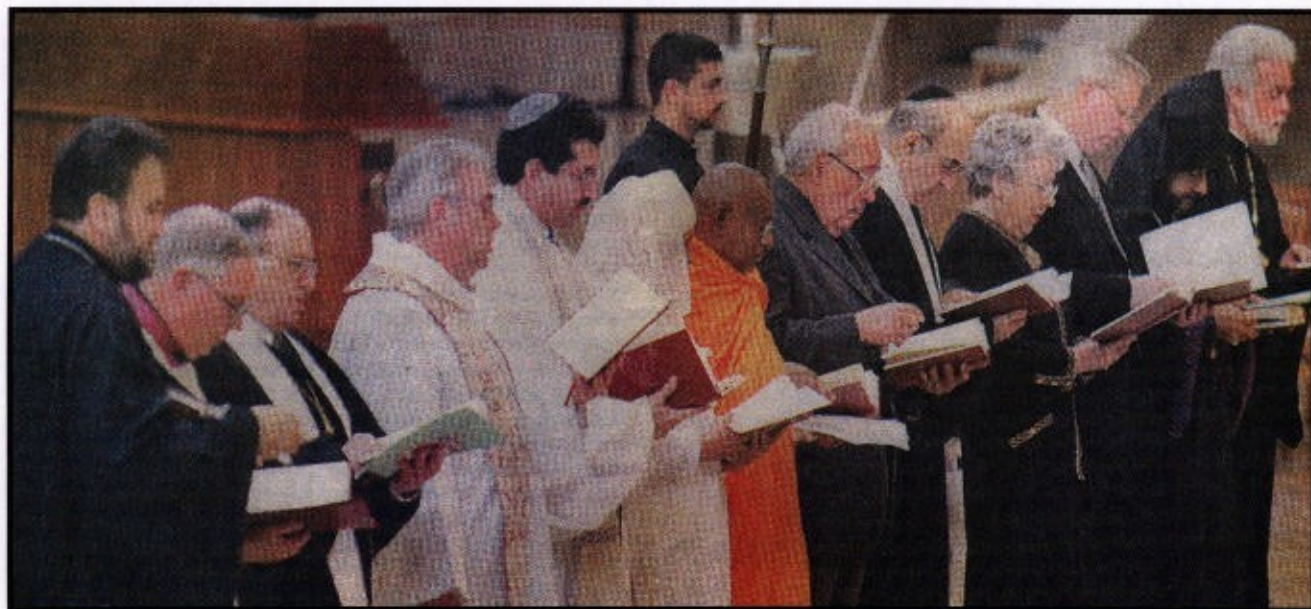


In America Dharma Vijaya has had the opportunity to meet with the leaders of many different religious traditions.

Meeting often to help build bridges of understanding between people of different cultures and different faiths.



Coming together in times of celebration or times of sorrow...sharing the happiness...giving or receiving strength from one another.



Almost three years ago, a Burmese devotee, a very fine woman doctor named Dr. Khin Swe Win wanted to become a bhikkhuni. Ven. U Silananda personally requested Ven. Piyananda to perform the samaneri ordination and give her the name Gunasari. With the support of our good Thai friend Kung Pongsavas she later got full ordination in Sri Lanka, and now lives in Riverside, teaching her own devotees.

Dharma Vijaya and Ven. Piyananda's personal role in the re-establishing the bhikkhuni order in Theravada Buddhism is one of the real highlights of Buddhism in this country in the past couple of decades.

Inter-religious Dialogue

DVBV also initiated a Buddhist-Catholic dialogue, initially led by Ven. Dr. Ratanasara. Ven. Ratanasara had met a local Monsignor, Father Royale Vadakin, who was the parish priest at a nearby church. They met in the Post Office, catching either other's eye as they walked in wearing their respective religious uniforms. In the early 80's Heidi Singh, currently a Buddhist minister and one of the first two Bodhicaris, was working with the Catholic archbishop. With her support, Ven. Ratanasara, Ven. Dr. Karuna and Ven. Piyananda joined with the Catholic church to start the dialogue with Father Royale Vadakin. It has been going on for almost 17 years. The group meets about once a month to discuss similarities and differences. They have made strong friendships. Because of this whenever there is a special ceremony, the Buddhist and Catholic leaders are mutually invited, especially Father Alexei Smith, who is the current leader of the Inter-Religious Council, and whose friendship we especially value.

DVBV also joined the major interfaith group representing all religions in the area, the Inter-Religious Council of So. California. From time to time Dharma Vijaya has participated in public dialogues to explain Buddhist philosophies. As a result wherever our monks go there is recognition for Buddhists. There was a great dialogue at the Baha'i center after the tragedy of 9/11, from

which a CD was produced. In addition, Dharma Vijaya monks have been chaplains at all the leading local universities, and were even chaplains at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic village. There is ongoing interest on the university campuses, and Dharma Vijaya maintains close relations with the Buddhist Student Associations.

An important part of inter-group dialogue is not just the inter-religious dialogue, but dialogue between Buddhist groups which barely knew of each other's existence except through historical prejudices and cultural biases. In fact, the Sangha Council of Southern California was founded in response to the troubles at the first temple in Hollywood. Since the dayaka sabha had kicked out the monks, personally insulted them and insulted the Sangha as a whole, it seemed imperative to get the Sangha in this country together to defend itself. Venerable Ratanasara, Venerable Piyananda, and Ven. Ananda realized that their problems could also be the problems of all Buddhist Sangha in this "new world", not just of Sri Lankan or other Theravada monks. So in December 1979, they founded the Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California under the presidency of Ven. Dr. Ratanasara, a position he held for over 20 years until his passing. Ven. Piyananda is the current president of this dynamic and important group which represents all Buddhist denominations and groups. Every year they hold a common Buddha's Birthday celebration featuring religious and cultural practices of all Buddhist groups, often at a local university.

Work in the community, local and worldwide

Dharma Vijaya has been part of the social fabric of the Los Angeles area, helping wherever it can. When LA had the riots and conflict between African Americans, Koreans, and others, the Venerables Ratanasara, Piyananda, Ananda and others became personally involved in trying to bring the groups together. They understood the cultural conflicts and were able to help bring about some mutual understanding.

Dharma Vijaya has also pitched in to help Buddhist communities in need. For example, when Wat Thai was founded, the neighbors were unhappy, and petitioned the city against the temple. There were hearings at the LA City Hall, and Dharma Vijaya brought priests, ministers, and rabbis to help testify on behalf of the Thai community to protect its religious freedom and demonstrate that it wasn't a threat or a detriment to the surrounding neighborhood. Wat Thai now has decades as an important and respected neighbor in its local community.

In Hacienda Heights, Hsi Lai temple, the local temple of Taiwan's famous Fo Kuang Shan, had similar trouble with a few of the neighbors when it started. Dharma Vijaya helped coordinate the participation of various religious groups to send their leaders to attend meetings at city hall to stand up for Hsi Lai's rights. It is now one of the great landmarks of the city of Hacienda Heights, with a breath-taking view of the San Gabriel Valley.

The Burmese community in Loma Linda was initially turned down when it tried to start a temple. Dharma Vijaya was there to help them overcome this hurdle. The same occurred in Azusa with Wat Pa Dhammacha, a Thai Buddhist temple. Dharma Vijaya has always gone out of its way to help any temple in any community that asked for help.

Many will remember the senseless brutal murders of monks and nuns in Phoenix in 1990. Venerable Piyananda went there immediately to help the remaining Sangha and community to cope with that tragedy.

Dharma Vijaya has been able to extend its support beyond the borders of this country to those in need. Dr. Niranjala and Lokubanda Tillakaratne joined with Dede Whiteside, an American DVBV lay minister, and Bhante Piyananda to found Vision Vijaya. It has collected over 25,000 pairs of eyeglasses from around Los Angeles, and once a year has gone to Sri Lanka to donate them. Thus eye doctors in Sri Lanka were able to supply the village poor with the gift of good sight so they could be productive members of society and fend for themselves.

For the past ten years Dharma Vijaya has arranged to have sponsors who provide scholarships for medical students in Sri Lanka. Thus far over a hundred students have graduated with the help of these scholarships. And currently we are providing scholarships for 15 students.

A scholarship fund that is established for Buddhist monks studying in Sri Lanka is sponsored by our Dhammacari Panna (Hellen Mansfield) with the help of her Vietnamese community.

On December 26, 2004, the unprecedented catastrophe which was the tsunami struck widely across Southeast Asia, including Sri Lanka. The active members of Dharma Vijaya, American friends, and Ven. Piyananda got together to look for ways to help through specific concrete action. Assistance came from all the different people whose lives Ven. Piyananda and Dharma Vijaya had touched throughout the years. They were able to collect \$250K and started a housing construction program in Galle district, in the city of Ambalangoda, Kulegama, Galagodawatta. The estimated cost of each house built was \$6K. Ven. Piyananda has spent a great portion of his time working on this project. Many hours of almost every day are dedicated to this so that some other activities had to be put on hold.

Activity and Growth Inside Dharma Vijaya

Temple monks under Venerable Piyananda's leadership and guidance have undertaken many Buddhist activities in the temple. The Sunday Dharma School for children has been a permanent fixture for decades, and helps the young children of immigrants develop an understanding and appreciation of their heritage as they learn to guide their lives along Buddhist principles.

From the very beginning Dharma Vijaya has offered meditation classes. Currently they are held Tuesday and Friday evenings at 7 pm, supplemented by occasional full day or weekend retreats. Ven. Piyananda and other Sangha members also go to the houses of

friends who host meditation classes for their non-Buddhist friends.

The expansion of Dharma Vijaya from two houses to four pieces of property was driven by a not very religious problem, the need for parking. By city law, to hold ceremonies, the Vihara had to supply parking facilities. We either had to move somewhere else or find parking to expand our activities. We didn't have enough parking with the two houses. Related to this was the fact that we used to practice meditation in the garage, but the city condemned it. This led to the construction of our beautiful meditation hall with the help of the SL community, completed before 2000. Simultaneously, Dharma Vijaya negotiated to buy the two adjacent houses. We bought them in October of 1999. It was too much expense with the mortgage, so Dharma Vijaya rented out to some Buddhist at low rates, and used the space in back for parking. It gave but little income, yet paid the mortgage and alleviated the parking problem. Fortunately now property is higher in value. Perhaps someday Dharma Vijaya can capitalize on the value of what we have to move to another location. Dharma Vijaya's members come from all over Southern California, yet we have developed affection for our urban location.

A driving force in Dharma Vijaya's advancement has been the board of directors. The original board of directors, 12 founding members, requested Ven. Piyananda replace them with new members. Bhante insisted that as founding members they were lifetime members of the board. However, he did follow their advice by adding several new members to the board to keep our advisors fresh and in touch with the evolving community needs. Fifteen were added for 5 year appointments, and their terms can be extended with the approval of the board and the Sangha.

Dharma Vijaya now has an administrator to help interface with the outside community, draft speeches, and help Ven. Piyananda who has so many varied demands on his time. He is also constantly training new monks, as once they are trained, they are eager to start their own temples to make the Dharma available more widely. So Ven. Piyananda is

constantly starting over with new Sangha staff members. It's good and bad, as all the Sangha who have passed through Dharma Vijaya have made a very positive contribution and have been great role models for the community.

Serving the Sri Lankan community and helping Sri Lankan Immigrants

One important function of this temple has been as a shelter and refuge for many young Sri Lankan men and women who arrive from SL in this country with nothing. Our temple and monks have personally helped them since the founding of this temple. Over 1000 have had food, shelter, support, and help. Some come back and help us. Some were even in prison and illegal in this country, and Venerable Piyananda had to bail them out. He often spent his own money on them. Some of these people later disappeared, and abandoned the temple without even repaying the money spent to bail them out, but most have continued to be faithful members.

Now the lotto visa system yields about 300-400 Sri Lankans annually who get a green card, and they love to come to California. They come with nothing but the green card, often with no skills, limited English, and little money. They need to find a place to live, get a job, go to the social security office, take their children to school: in all of this Dharma Vijaya has been a constant help.

While it is not Dharma Vijaya's primary function to be a social service supplier for Sri Lankans, it has been happy to fill that role while teaching and spreading the Buddha-dharma in this country.

Of course Ven. Piyananda and the temple Sangha have always endeavored to serve the established Sri Lankan community in ways that help them feel comfortable in their two cultures. Most Saturdays and Sundays the Sangha are invited to Sri Lankan houses for dana, and they are offered food respectfully by the community members who appreciate the security of having traditional Buddhist Sangha in this strange land. In this way the Sri Lankan community and the Dharma

Vijaya monks have been helping each other for the 25 years since the temple was established.

Working with the Thai Community

Ven. Piyananda has always been involved personally with the Thai community, which has tremendous respect for him. He has helped in so many ways with religious counseling to help the people deal with their problems. They don't hesitate to come to temple to ask for help with problems, trusting Bhante's advice, based on the Buddha's teachings. If they stray from the Buddhist path, Bhante reminds them of what they have neglected, and helps them get back on the right path. They respect him even to the degree that they seek his advice on many matters, even business matters, because he can find an answer to any question based on his knowledge of Tipitaka.

Publications of Dharma Vijaya

In the past 25 years, Dharma Vijaya has published a number of articles, magazines and booklets. These include five volumes by the Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayake Thera, namely *The Life of Buddha for Young People*, *The Buddhist Way*, *Meditation on Breathing*, *Development of the Sublime States*, and *A Successful Life*. Volumes by Ven. Piyananda include *Love in Buddhism* and *Saffron Days in L.A.*, which has been translated into many languages. In fact, the translation into Sinhala by Bhadraji M.

Jayatilake recently won Best Translation of the Year in Sri Lanka. A particularly popular publication has been our own Vandana (Devotions) booklet, first published over 20 years ago, and, after many reprints, recently published in a combined volume as *Buddhist Ministry in the West and a Book of Buddhist Devotion*. We have also published numerous editions of Dharma Vijaya Newsletter and Dharma Vijaya Magazine. The latter has included thematic editions on Dhamma on a number of topics. Ven. Piyananda and other Sangha and lay members of the Vihara have contributed numerous articles to other publications over the years.

Looking forward

Dharma Vijaya, the Victory of Truth, endures after 25 years. We exist because the Truth of Dharma is the greatest truth. Yet to insure the continued triumph of that truth, it takes the full effort of those who are committed to this truth. The members of the temple of all nationalities, the friends, the adherents of other religions who are our community partners, as well as the temple Sangha under the leadership of Ven. Walpola Piyananda have shown an unwavering commitment to the victory of truth. The first twenty-five years have had their share of challenges, but they have been a great success and comfort to us all. Let's look forward to the celebration of the next 25 years. See you in 2030.

BODHICARI DHARMAJIVA (Stan Levinson) has been following Ven. Piyananda around since 1979, when they met at the International Buddhist Meditation Center. He became an Upasaka at the Beechwood temple in 1979, and was the first Bodhicari, along with Heidi Singh. He has edited many Dharma Vijaya publications of the past 25 years, and collaborated on some of Ven. Ananda Maitreya's books as well. He is most proud of being indirectly responsible for the "renaming" of Ven. Lenagala Sumedhananda, one of the four key monks at Dharma Vijaya in the early days, along with Venerables Ratanasara, Ananda, and Piyananda. One day in the early 1980's, in the kitchen of Dharma Vijaya, his wife Venus saw a shadow in back of her and asked "Honey, can you pass me that bowl?" That shadow turned out not to be Stan, but Ven. Sumedha, who from that moment on became known as Bhante Honey. Everything is impermanent, but while he is in this body, Stan says his memories of those days of Dharma Vijaya will always be among the high points of his life.

Current Resident Monks



From left to right:

**Ven. Bambarawane Kalyanawansa Thera, Ven. Tanamalwila Chandaratana,
Ven. Pallawela Rahula Maha Thera, Ven. Walpola Piyananda Nayaka Maha Thera,
Ven. Maitipe Wimalasara Maha Thera, Ven. Muruthamure Pannaloka Thera,
Ven. Walpola Mahinda** [not pictured Ven. Subhuti Shibuya Maha Thera (Sensei)]

Former Resident Monks

The late Ven. Balangoda Anandamaitriya Mahanayaka Maha Thera

The late Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara Nayaka Maha Thera

Ven. Lenagala Sumedhananda Mahanayaka Maha Thera

Ven. Pandith Weihene Pannaloka Nayaka Maha Thera

Ven. Pinnagoda Sumanatissa Maha Thera

Ven. Elle Chandawimala Maha Thera

Ven. Dr. Pannila Ananda Nayaka Maha Thera

Ven. Madawala Punnaaji Maha Thera

Ven. Acharya Buddharakkita Maha Thera

The late Ven. Dr. Ellawala Nandhissara Nayaka Maha Thera

Ven. Hinbunne Kondanna Maha Thera

Ven. Babarakotuwe Anandamangala Maha Thera

Ven. Kaburagalle Nanda Maha Thera

Ven. Alawala Subhuti Maha Thera

Ven. Koppakande Sumanajothi Thera

Ven. Watogala Saranasiri Thera

Ven. Darangala Narada Thera

Ven. Wilattawa Vipassi

Ven. Pamankada Ananda

Ven. Parawahara Pannasiri

Ven. Hirikatiye Vijitha

FROM
A
TINY
BEGINNING



OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL
HAS GROWN
TEACHING BOTH THE
BUDDHA'S DHAMMA
AND
SRI LANKAN CULTURE

Board of Directors

Founding Board of Directors

The late Ven. Dr. H. Ratanasara Nayaka
Maha Thera (Patron/Director)
Ven. Dr. Walpola Piyananda Nayaka Maha
Thera (Abbot & President)
Ven. Pandith L. Sumedhananda Nayaka
Maha Thera
Ven. Dr. Pannila Ananda Maha Thera
(Secretary)
Ven. Madawala Seelawimala Maha Thera

The late Sidney Attygalla,
Victor Austin, M.D.
Himasiri De Silva, M.D.
Keerthi De Silva, M.D.
Roland Dharmasooriya, M.D.
Gamini Jayasinghe, M.D.
Asoka Jayasinghe, M.D.
T. Jeyaranjan, M.D.
Nalin Nanayakkara, M.D.
Amare Weerakkody
Stanley Wijesekara, M.D.

Current Board of Directors

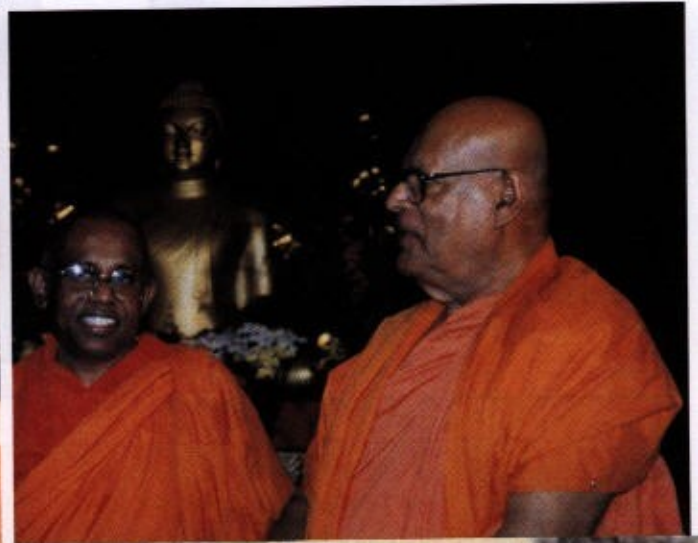
Ven. Dr. Walpola Piyananda Nayaka Maha
Thera (Abbot & President)
Ven. Pandith L. Sumedhananda Nayaka
Maha Thera
Ven. Dr. Pannila Ananda Maha Thera
(Secretary)
Ven. Madawala Seelawimala Maha Thera
Ven. Pallawela Rahula Maha Thera
Ven. Muruthamure Pannaloka Thera
(Asst. Secretary)
Ven. Bambarawane Kalyanawansa Thera
(Asst. to Abbot)
Ven. Walpola Mahinda (Asst. to Abbot)

Ananda Amarawansa
Atula Athurugirige
Mallika Attygalla, M.D.
Victor Austin, M.D.
Victor Coronado, M.D.
Himasiri De Silva, M.D.
Keerthi De Silva, M.D.
Pearl Dharmasooriya
Chandra Dissanayake, M.D.
Ramya Gunasekera
Jaliya Gunawardana
Kirula Hettigoda
Gamini Jayasinghe, M.D.
Asoka Jayasinghe, M.D.
Anura Jayatilleke
T. Jeyaranjan, M.D.
Ana Kadin
Tissa Karunasiri
Stan Levinson
Chintana Lintong
Devan Nanayakkara
Nalin Nanayakkara, M.D.
Gotabaya Rajapaksa
Dhanapala Rodrigo, M.D.
Niranjala Tillakaratne, Ph.D.
Dhammika Vidanapathirana
Amare Weerakkody
Dede Whiteside
Lakshman Wickramarachchi
Stanley Wijesekara, M.D.

❧ DISTINGUISHED VISITORS ❧

While it's impossible to remember, much less single out, all the wonderful people who have passed through the doors of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara over 25 years, we've assembled a list of visitors that may awaken some memories in our readers.

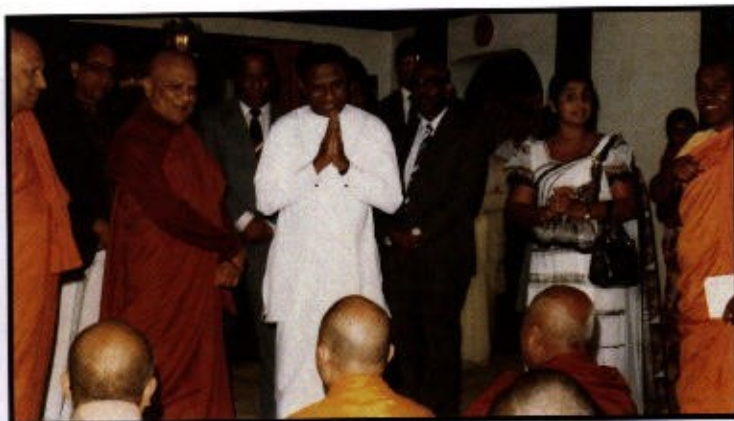
The late Ven. Dr. Dikwela Piyananda Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Dr. Parawahara Pannananda Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Hadigalle Pannatissa Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Walgammulle Pannarama Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Madagama Vajiranana Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Madagoda Sumanatissa Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Piyadassi Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Henepola Gunaratana Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Mapalagama Wipulasara Maha Thera	
Ven. Kakkapalleye Anuruddha Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Pandith Kurunagoda Piyatissa Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Haggalle Dhammarama Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Witarandeniye Chandajothi Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Welamitiyawe Kusaladhamma Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Kuburugamuwe Vajira Maha Thera	
Ven. Kaburupitiye Nandaratana Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Welamitiyawe Dhammarakkhitha Nayaka Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Uduwawala Chandananda Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Diviyagaha Yassassi Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Ittapana Dhammalankara Anunayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Galaboda Ganissara Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Dr. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Maha Thera	
Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Maha Thera	
Ven. Pinnagoda Sumanatissa Maha Thera	
Ven. Gonadeniye Hemaloka Nayaka Maha Thera	
Ven. Mampe Wimalakitthi Maha Thera	
The late Ven. Dr. Migoda Pannaloka Maha Thera	
The Late Ven. Wallampitiye Dhammika	
Dr. A. T. Ariyaratna,	Leader of Sarvodaya Movement
Bishop Don Sylvester, from Galle	
The late Mr. U Thakin Nu	Former Prime Minister of Myanmar
The late Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa	Former President of Sri Lanka
Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa	Prime Minister of Sri Lanka
Mr. Ranil Wicramasinghe	Opposition leader of Sri Lanka
The late Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali	Former Defense Minister of Sri Lanka
Mr. Dinesh Gunawardana	Minister of Urban Development and Water Supply of Sri Lanka
Mr. Anura Bandaranayaka	Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Sri Lanka
Mr. Susil Premajayantha	Minister of Power and Energy of Sri Lanka
Dr. Karunasena Kodituwakku	Former Education Minister of Sri Lanka
Mr. P. Dayaratna	Former Minister of Health of Sri Lanka
Mr. A. H. M. Fowzie	Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Sri Lanka
Mr. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardhana	Minister of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage of Sri Lanka
Mr. Sunil Handunnetthi	Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka
Dr. Ananda Guruge	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Mr. Susantha de Alwis	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Mr. Ernest Corea	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Mr. Mangala Munasinghe	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to India
Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Dr. Warnasena Rasaputram	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Mr. Tissa Wijeratna	Sri Lanka Ambassador to Israel
Mr. Devinda Subasinghe	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Mr. Bernard Goonetilleke	Former Sri Lanka Ambassador to United States
Mr. Nissanka Wijewardhana,	Former Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United Nations



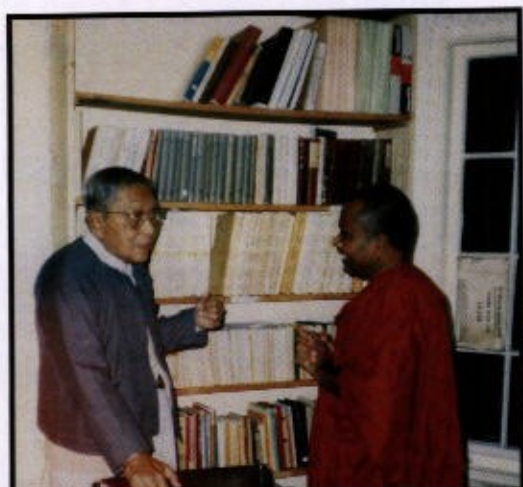
FROM NEAR OR FAR
MANY SANGHA MEMBERS VISIT.
SOME TRAVELING ACROSS MANY
MILES OF LAND AND SEA.



Indian President Mr. Giani Z. Singh



The late Sri Lankan President Mr. Premadasa Ranasinghe



Burma's
PM
the late
Mr. U Nu



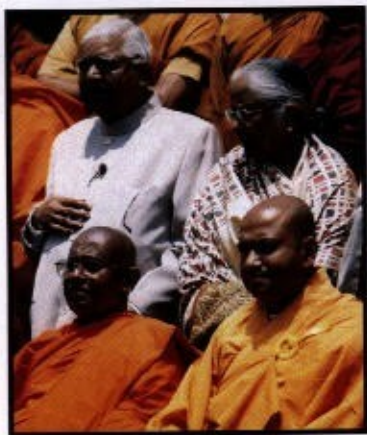
Sri Lankan PM Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa



SL Opposition Leader Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe



SL Foreign Minister Mr. Anura Bandaranayake



Mr. & Mrs. S.N. Goenka



PM of Thailand and Cabinet members

My Sincere Thanks to Everyone

First and foremost, I want to thank my parents who gave me life and the foundation upon which to develop my spiritual life. I am grateful to the late Ven. Walpola Gnanaratana Maha Thera who first ordained me and the late Kombala Medhananda Maha Thera and Ven. Havpe Somananda Nayaka Maha Thera who were my higher ordination teachers.

There is no way for me to list all the innumerable monks and lay people who have helped me through the years. But let me mention a few, the late Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula Maha Thera, the late Ven. Dr. Thich Thien An, Mr. Ron Bogan, Dr. Edmund Perry and Dr. George Bond who gave me invaluable assistance to become established in this country. The late Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara Nayaka Maha Thera and Ven. Dr. Pannila Ananda were there from the beginning. I can never forget Ven. Lenagala Summedhananda Maha Nayaka Maha Thera and his spiritual guidance. I would also like to thank the late Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitriya Maha Nayaka Maha Thera. I would like to thank the following Nayaka Maha Theras: the late Ven. Neluwe Jinaratana, Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda, Ven. Henepola Gunaratana, Ven. Kurunegoda Piyatissa, Ven. Madawala Seelawimala and Ven. Madewala Punnaji for their guidance.

We would not have our temple without the late Mr. Sidney Attygalla, Dr. Gamini Jayasinghe, Dr. Asoka Jayasinghe, Miss Ramya Gunasekera, Dr. Sisira Guanawardena, Dr. Roland Dharmasuriya, Dr. Victor Austen, Dr. Nalin Nanayakkara, Dr. Kumar De Silva, Dr. Himasiri De Silva, Dr. T. Jeyaranjan, Dr. Stanley Wijesekera and Amare Weerakkody. I thank you all.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Mr. & Mrs. Boonthai Kusitkhun & family in Thailand for their continuous support. Also much appreciated is the support that Prapai Boonyindee and Ana Kadin give to the temple. I would like to thank Ven. Shibuya Subhuti our meditation teacher and our International Patron Rev. Daiun Iba for their help to our Sangha.

I am most deeply indebted to the countless people I have encountered throughout my life who have given me the precious gift of friendship, without which I would not have been able to accomplish so much. I have been most fortunate to be able to share the Dhamma with many people from different cultural backgrounds. It has been an invaluable learning experience for me, one that I cherish. I am ever grateful to Stan Levinson and Cynthia Shimazu who have been helping me to share the Dhamma in this great land of freedom, equality and opportunity.

It is my pleasure to thank all of you supportive devotees, Sri Lankan, Thai, American, Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, and Burmese. We cannot exist without your generosity. I have been very fortunate to always have a supportive group of resident monks who assist me in all my activities.

Finally, I extend my special thanks to all Board Members who have been serving the Vihara.

May you all be well and happy.

Bhante Piyananda

Venerable Walpola Piyananda

By Bhadraji Mahinda Jayatilaka

It was the year of the bicentennial, 1976, when I first met Venerable Walpola Piyananda, at the Buddhist temple on New Hampshire Avenue in Los Angeles. It was an early afternoon on a late summer day as I walked into the premises of this Vietnamese Buddhist temple, known as the International Buddhist Meditation Center with my sister Rani, visiting from Massachusetts, and my friend, Jim – a Catholic priest originally from Bristol, England. Here we were, from the far corners of this earth drawn to one place by the one intention of seeing a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka.

The chief incumbent of the temple, Venerable Thich Thien An directed us to where the newly arrived Sri Lankan monk was. As we walked into the dimly lit room my eyes were drawn to the golden robes of a serene figure in a meditative mood.

With a gentle voice he welcomed us, and we sat on cushions on the matted floor. With a pleasant smile he told us that we were some of the first Sri Lankans he had met since coming to Los Angeles. I felt honored and privileged to meet a figure greatly revered in many communities around the world.

Venerable Piyananda blessed us by chanting pirith (Lord Buddha's meaningful words of wisdom) and by tying a blessed thread around our wrists (a thread that holds the powers of pirith - a spool of which Venerable Piyananda carries in his satchel wherever he goes). Not only does he carry the Great Buddha's wisdom in a pirith thread, he carries our revered master teacher's wisdom in his whole being. The Venerable's whole life is dedicated to service to others, with the message of Lord Buddha (The Dharma) as his guide.

Venerable Walpola Piyananda had arrived in San Francisco on the Fourth of July – just a few weeks earlier. He told us how he was pleasantly surprised when he was taken from the airport directly into a parade that

celebrated the Bicentennial. On his first day in the U.S.A. he ended up riding on a large float created by the Golden Mountain Buddhist Monastery - the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Venerable Piyananda and a Chinese Theravada monk, Venerable Dhammajoti stood on either side of a large gold Buddha statue as the float glided down many of the main roads of San Francisco while thousands and thousands of people stood on either side of the parade route. The festivities related to the parade went on from five p.m. till around midnight.

At the Golden Mountain Monastery, Ven. Piyananda had meditated with about sixty others for seven days. The wake up call was at 4 a.m., and the meditation under the guidance of the Chinese monk- the Abbot, Venerable Master Heng Hua went on until lunch time. Then again from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. they all meditated. At 7 p.m. religious (Dhamma) discussions commenced. These spiritual activities continued till 10 p.m. when everyone went to sleep. After ten days at this monastery, Venerable Piyananda came to Los Angeles with the help of an American from Milwaukee (Ron Bogan) that he had met earlier in India.

Venerable Piyananda's life journey has taken him to many places, where he has met many interesting people.

He was born in 1943, on October 2nd, in Imaduwa, Walpola, which is in the south of Sri Lanka, in the precinct of Thalpe, in the District of Galle. His father's name was Bulegoda Arachchige Don Andris, and his mother, Dombagoda Liyanage Laura. Venerable was their fifth child and was named Bulegoda Arachchige Piyasena.

His father was born in Atturuliya near the town Akuressa and attended school there. A classmate of his was the well-known Sri Lankan progressive politician Dr. S. A. Wickramasinghe. Then his father went to Walpola to farm. While living there, he met

the daughter of a highly respected family, the house of Batalanda, named Laura.. Soon they were married and with the money he saved Bulegoda bought some land and built a house that was known as the Wilegedera (the house by the lake). A branch of the Modara River known as the Polathu Oya flowed nearby, and across from the river were the surrounding mountains. It was a beautiful sight with tea and rubber estates as far as the eye could see. There weren't any other houses nearby. Piyasena was born in this house. There were eight siblings in the family - four girls and four boys. Piyasena had three older sisters and one older brother. After Piyasena were two younger brothers and a younger sister.

Young Piyasena attended the Walpola Buddhist Co-educational School through the fifth grade. (1950 till 1955). By now he was eleven years old, and in July he went to see some relatives in Batemulla with his mother and an elder sister. He was really an un-invited guest because his mother told him not to follow them when they started the journey. But Piyasena wanted to go along. At this time an older relative, a blind woman known as Athurugiriwatte Loku Amma (a cousin of Laura), was walking down the road. Mother told Piyasena that if he helped the blind woman to go to her house he could indeed accompany them. Gladly, Piyasena helped the blind relative to her house and then joined his mother to go to Batemulla. At this time, he did not realize that this journey would change his life. In Batemulla lived Hitchchi Aiya, a relative, whose father had left the family when Hitchchi Aiya was only 2 years old, to become a Buddhist monk. He was named Walpola Gnanaratana and had received his saffron robes at the Bopagama Temple in Attanagalla. He liked to serve the poor, and he lived in a small poor hamlet known as Puranpottha at the Punyawar-danaramaya temple. Hitchchi Aiya always wanted someone else from his family to become a monk. When Hitchchi Aiya asked Piyasena whether he would like to become a Buddhist monk, the young Piyasena agreed without any hesitation. He would go to the bodhi tree that was near his home and offer flowers every day. Piyasena's father was a chief committee member of the Walpola Gautamaramaya. The abbot at the Walpola

temple - Venerable Walpola Devananda, was also a first cousin of Piyasena's mother. In those days horoscopes of all the newborn were calculated and written by the monks at the temples. In Piyasena's village, the horoscopes were done by the Venerable Mapalagama Amarawansa. His horoscope had (Pavidi Yoga) signs of someone becoming a monk. Hearing of Piyasena's horoscope, Venerable Gnanaratana (Hitchchi Aiya's father) and many other monks also came to see the parents, asking if Piyasena would become a monk at their temples. The parents thought that going to a temple outside of the village was better than staying in the village.

Piyasena, even as a young boy, would go to the small cave in the back of the house and meditate in the evening. Family members always had to come looking for him but most of the time they knew where they could find him, either in a temple or meditating in the cave. When Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, the leader of the opposition at that time, (who later became the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka) came to the temple in August of 1955 to open a Sunday school at Bopagama Sudarsanaramaya, he noticed Piyasena as a very gifted child. Piyasena was very good at giving speeches and debating and when Mr. Bandaranayake heard the boy talk, he patted the lad's head and said, "This is a very bright, talented boy. The Sunday school will immensely help someone like this. We should open Sunday schools all over the island to help young ones like this." At this time Piyasena was staying at the temple in order to become a novice monk. He stayed at the temple for three months before donning the saffron robes.

Piyasena Gets a New Name

In 1955, on the 26th of October at 9.48 a.m., which was the auspicious time selected for this special occasion, Piyasena's head was shaven and the robes were given to him. At the time the belt of the robe was tied around his neck as a symbol of becoming a monk, the temple bell in the distance started to chime of its own accord. Everyone thought that this was a good omen telling of a great future.

A committee of monks known as the Sangha Sabhaawa selected the name for the novice monk. The chief priest of the Attanagalla Raja Maha Vihara - Venerable Kongoda Pemananda Nayake Mahathera was the one who tied the belt of the robe (sivuru patiya) around the new monk with a new name, Piyananda. Since he came from the village of Walpola, he was named Walpola Piyananda.

In the month of November that year, young Walpola Piyananda Thera went to the Urapola Sirisangabo Pirivena (a learning center for monks) in Bopetha, near Attanagalla. At this time Ven. Walpola Gnanaratana was admitted to the hospital in Colombo for treatment for a tumor in his eye. This was a great concern for the young monk but he had to continue with his mission in life. He was a great speaker. The second in command at the Pirivena was the Venerable Uduwara Dhammarakkita who realized that the novice monk had great abilities as a speaker and taught him many sermons. At the age of twelve, Venerable Piyananda was well known as a preacher of the Dhamma. Since he appeared small, he was promoted as a "seven year old Samanera" (novice) who was good at preaching Bana (Buddha's words of wisdom).

He was preaching every day everywhere - in the Siyana Province and the Gampaha district, in and around Attanagalla, Vatinapaha, Minuwangoda, and Aluthapola, to name a few places. Posters were printed and there were loud speakers for the young preacher. Venerable Piyananda says that he lost his stage fright even as a very young boy. His father had encouraged him and his younger brother to go to the rubber estate and talk to the rubber trees, thinking of them as the audience. He and his brother would debate competitively in front of the trees. Later this helped the Venerable to become the first place winner in the inter-university speaking contests held between the four leading universities on the island at the time. His younger brother, Ranaweera also won the competition for the Western Province, becoming the best speaker in the Colombo District. But all this came much later. Now as a young novice monk he was in great demand as a preacher of the Dhamma. The rigorous routines of preaching everywhere

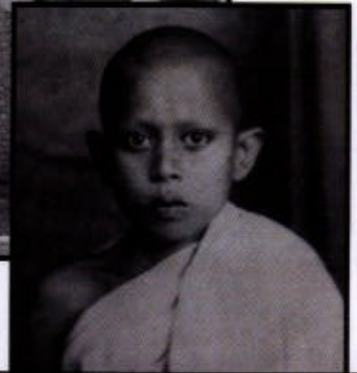
became a hindrance to his studies. Sometimes, by the time the sermon was done, it would be 1 a.m. or as late as 3 a.m. Ven. Piyananda stayed in Bopatta for only nine months leaving to go to Aswana Dharmaratnodaya Pirivena near Minuwangoda to study. The rules and regulations at this institute for monks were strict and the monk in charge there did not allow Venerable Piyananda to go and preach as before. Whoever came to take the young monk for a sermon had to take him in a car; there had to be someone to take care of him on these journeys; and the sermons were limited to only Saturdays and Sundays.

Venerable Piyananda studied at this pirivena only for a year and a half (1956-57). During this time, Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake became the Prime Minister and Venerable Piyananda was privileged to attend the oath taking ceremonies in Colombo with the Chief monk of the Atthangalla temple. When Mr. Bandaranayake was leaving the country on a tour as the new Prime Minister, Venerable Piyananda went to the Ratmalana airport to bless the Prime Minister by chanting pirith.

During the vacation time, the young Venerable went to see his parents in the village. The chief monk at the village temple strongly insisted that the young monk stay at the village temple since the other relative monk was still in the hospital in Colombo undergoing treatment for the eye cancer. An incentive for him to stay was studying under Ven. Mapalagama Amarawansa who was very good at astrology. While staying at the village temple, Venerable Piyananda not only studied astrology, he also learned the poems from the Sandesha Kavyas such as Gira Sandesha and Salalihini Sandesha. (These great books of poetry had been written by revered monks such as Ven. Thotagamuwe Sri Rahula. The titles *Sandeshas* refer to messages sent via birds and the poems describe the surroundings from a bird's point of view as it flies along its way). Venerable Piyananda did not limit his time to book learning, but was also involved in many welfare service activities such as digging wells for villagers who were without water. He organized welfare groups for young men and women in the village who in turn helped the villagers. He also worked with the



October 26, 1955 - Ordination



1965 Sri Jawaharlal Nehru Oratory contest
presented by the late Prime
Minister Mr. Dudley Senanayake



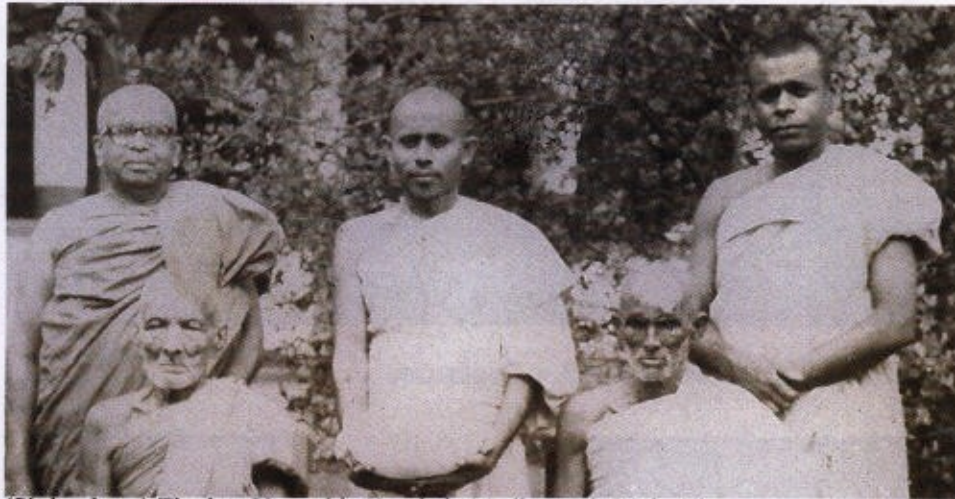
1966 – 1st prize for Sri Jawaharlal Nehru
2nd Prize Award Oratory Contest



1967 UNIVERSITY GRADUATION

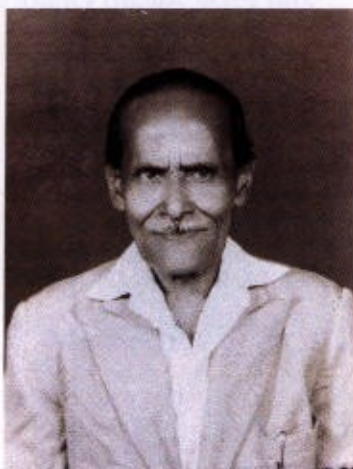
Teachers

High Ordination Day 1970



(Sitting l to r) The late Venerable Kombala Medhananda Maha Thera,
The late Venerable Walpola Devananda Maha Thera (Standing l to r) Ven. Pamankada Buddhasiha
Nayaka Maha Thera, Ven. Walpola Piyananda, Ven. Havpe Somananda Nayaka Maha Thera

The late
Venerable Dr.
Kotagama
Wacchissara
Maha Thera



My father, Bulegoda Arachchige Don Andris



My mother, Dobagoda Liyanage Laura

Dayaka Sabha - the group in charge of temple activities. After a short time, Venerable Amarawansa, who was Venerable Piyananda's teacher, left the temple and disrobed.

The chief monk was getting old and his student Ven. Walpola Vijitha was at this time studying in Colombo. Whenever the nearby temples invited someone from this temple invariably Venerable Piyananda had to attend to all the services and activities related to the temples such as danas and funeral services.

This did not allow Venerable Piyananda much time to study, but this was okay with the chief monk who thought that if young monks became too well educated they would disrobe. At this time a distant relative, Mr. Weeraman, was teaching at the Gunodaya Pirivena in Mahamodara. Ven. Piyananda revealed his dilemma of not being able to study further to Mr. Weeraman, who in turn spoke to the chief monk to allow Venerable Piyananda to attend the Pirivena. By the latter part of 1958, Venerable Piyananda was attending classes at this Pirivena. He was appointed the Kruthyadhikari (head of the steering committee) to oversee the danas and to be in charge of debating competitions. He was also in charge of the food services for the monks at the Dhana Shala (The alms hall). He had to make sure there was enough food for everyone and in case there was a shortage he had to organize quick dishes such as Pol Sambol (coconut chili salads) and Dahl (lentils). When the food was ready, Venerable Piyananda had to sound the bell for the student monks to come to the dining hall.

Ven. Hagoda Yasassi was the chief monk, but on a day that he had gone to Colombo, the second in command, Venerable Uparatana, came to see how things were in the dining hall. On this unfortunate day, Venerable Piyananda had to complete some class work before going to the hall and by the time he got there it was around 11 o'clock in the morning. Venerable Uparatana confronted Venerable Piyananda and, asking where he had been, blamed him for the shortage of food. Not only that, the older monk hit Venerable Piyananda on the head. The

unexpected blow knocked the young monk to the floor. He got up quietly and went to the dining hall to ring the bell for lunch. While everyone else took their bowls to the dining hall, he went to his room. He gathered what little money he had, picked up his umbrella and hid it under his robe, and walked out of the school premises. He wanted to go somewhere. He made his way to Galle and got onto a bus going to Colombo. He thought of going to Atthanagalla. At this time Mr. Weeraman was studying at the Teachers' Training College in Nittambuwa near Atthanagalla, so Venerable Piyananda changed his mind and got off at Nittambuwa instead. This afternoon, Mr. Weeraman was playing volleyball and on seeing the young monk he was very concerned. Venerable Piyananda explained how Venerable Uparatana had struck him, and told of his intention of going to Atthanagalla. Mr. Weeraman skillfully managed to accompany Venerable Piyananda back to the Gunodaya Pirivena. By this time there was chaos at the Pirivena, with everyone concerned about the missing monk. Even the police had come to check on things. When Venerable Uparatana saw Venerable Piyananda, the former asked for forgiveness and promised that he would never hit anyone again.

Another cousin of Venerable Piyananda's father, also a Buddhist monk, named Ven. Dr. Dehigaspe Pannasara, was suffering from Parkinson's disease. At the time he was about 55 years old and was planning to go to London for medical treatment. Venerable Pannasara, a highly educated monk, was the professor of Sinhala at the Vidyodaya University. Both of his assistant monks were still studying and he had no one to attend to him while in England. So Venerable Piyananda was chosen by his family to go to London with the sick monk, and he came to Colombo in order to go on this long journey. But on seeing the young monk, the Venerable Pannasara decided he was too young to go on this journey with him. Instead of going to London, he was sent to the Vidyodaya Pirivena, which was under the leadership of Venerable Kalukondayawe Pannasekara. Venerable Piyananda stayed at the Kalavitigodalla Purana Vihara in Wellampitiya while attending classes at the Vidyodaya Pirivena in early 1960. At that

time classes were held at the Nalanda College because the Pirivena had become a University and the teacher in charge of the class was Ven. Ambanwelle Pannasekera Nayaka Thera, who is now the Anunayaka of the Malwathu Parshawa chapter. (Second in command at the Malwatte chapter). There were 40 students in the class. Out of this, 39 were monks and one was a layman named Kotalawala. Among the most talented speakers in the debating team, were Vens. Piyananda and Raigama Somalankara who later disrobed.

The rule of the Pirivena was that the students were not allowed to attend the university classes until they completed the Pirivena education. The classes started with an odd system of a grade 8. Then one gradually reached the grade one level. Only after these eight years could one attend the university. After reaching level seven, Venerable Piyananda realized that another six years in such an institution would be a waste of time. He thought of passing the Senior School Certificate (SSC) and then sitting for the High School Certificate (HSC), which would allow him to enter the university.

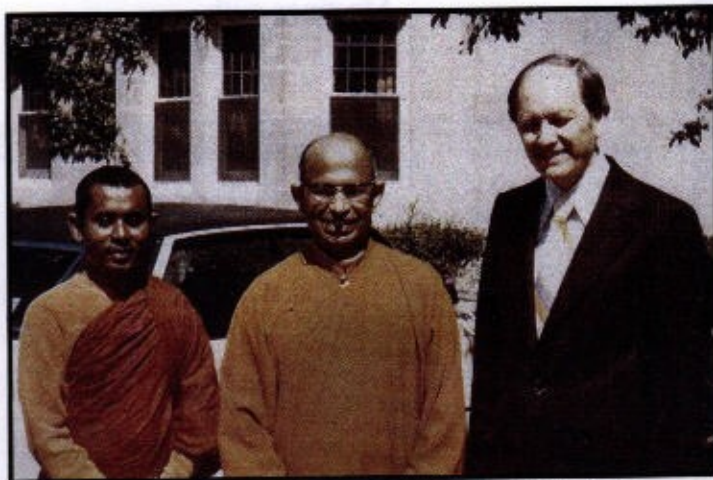
So, along with Ven. Raigama Somalankara, Venerable Piyananda started attending SSC classes at the Stafford College in Colombo. The classes were in the evening, and the two monks attended these lectures without telling anyone. The monthly tuition fees were ten rupees, but the compassionate teacher, Mr. Shantha Devapriya did not charge any money from the monks. They studied Sinhala, Buddhism and Math among other subjects. Both monks sat for the SSC exams and Venerable Piyananda knew beforehand that he would pass with flying colors.

During this time, the abbot at the Pamankada Sri Maha Vihara was related to Venerable Piyananda, and was Venerable Kotagama Wacchissara's teacher. Venerable Wacchissara was well known for his sermons, and whenever he could not give a sermon he invited Venerable Piyananda to be his replacement. Venerable Piyananda was invited to stay at the Pamankada temple, but he had other duties to attend to. His teacher was still ill and had to stay at the Gothatuwa

Bhikkhu Gilan Hala (a convalescent home for monks). Venerable Piyananda went to see his teacher at least once a week. When his teacher complained about the facilities he was moved to the Baddegama Keebiela convalescent home for monks.

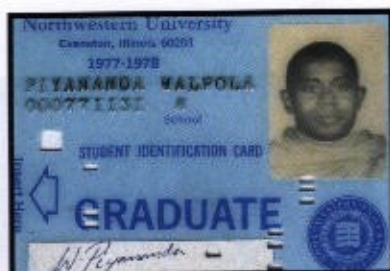
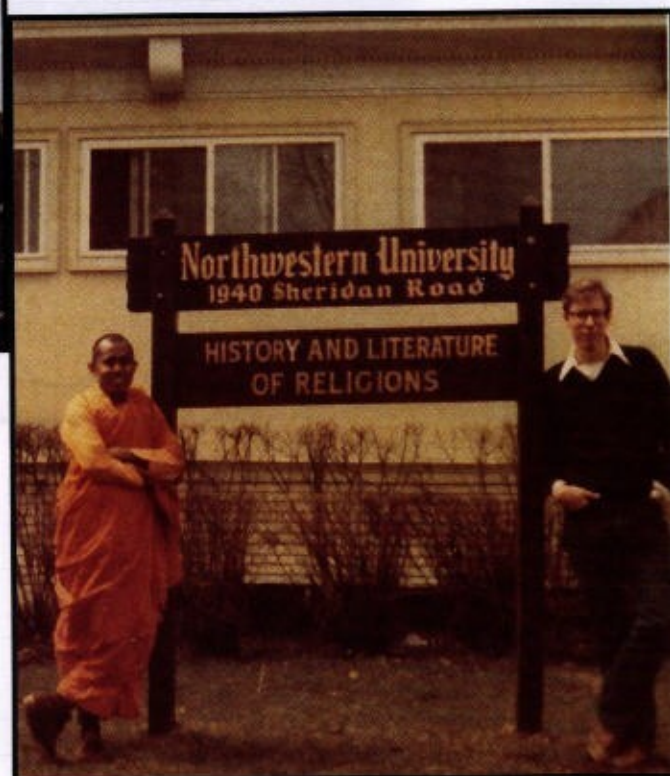
Being sure of passing the SSC exam with good results, he also realized that if he came to the Vidyalandara Pirivena he could enter the University in two years. Therefore he came to Dematagoda, but he was not accepted to the Pirivena right away. Venerable Nivandama Dhammakitti did not want to allow the young monk in without the results of the exam. Then Venerable Thalakiriyagala Dhammakitti argued and won Ven. Piyananda's admittance to the school. There were 60 students in the Pirivena. Among them was Venerable Maduluwawe Sobhitha who is now well known for his humanitarian works. Venerable Sobhitha and Venerable Piyananda were the leaders on the opposing sides of the debating teams but they became very good friends. While they were studying in their first year, the SSC results came from the Stafford College. Venerable Piyananda had passed the exam with flying colors as expected. But now he would have to still stay two more years in the Pirivena to sit for the University entrance exam. However, if they applied as external candidates, they could sit for the exam. So both Venerables Piyananda and Sobhitha decided to apply as outsiders, since otherwise there could have arisen a complaint of favoritism towards the Pirivenas. They sat for the exam without the Pirivena knowing about their actions. Venerable Maduluwawe Sobhitha applied to the Vidyodaya University while Venerable Piyananda applied to the Vidyalandara University.

He became the Principal of the Sunday school at the temple. This had been a prestigious school at one time with very well known students such as Dr. E.W. Adhikaram, Professors D. E. Hettiarachchi and Jinadasa Perera. At the time that Venerable Piyananda took over the school it was barely existing with very little student attendance. After he took over as the Principal, the school became very popular and its good reputation brought in over 400 students. Earlier, when he was



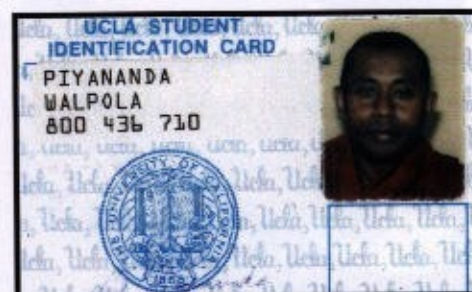
Bhante, the late Ven. Dr. Wapola Rahula &
the late Dr. Edmund Perry

A MASTERS FROM NORTHWESTERN

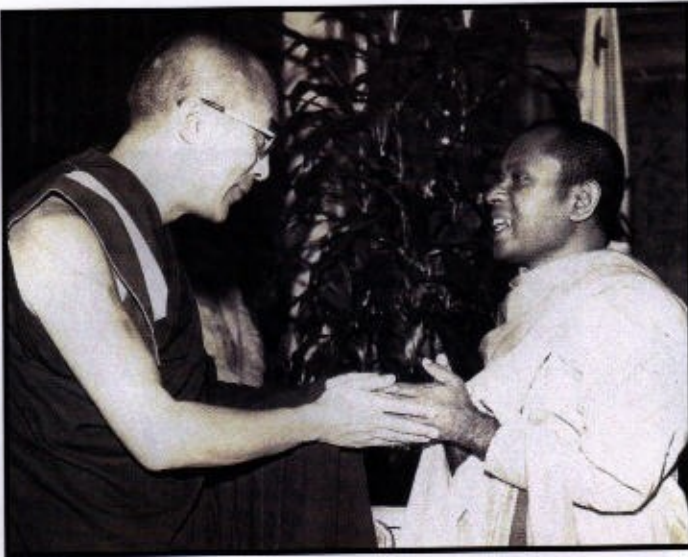


AT U.C.L.A.

IN THE DOCTORIAL PROGRAM



Meetings with



His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama



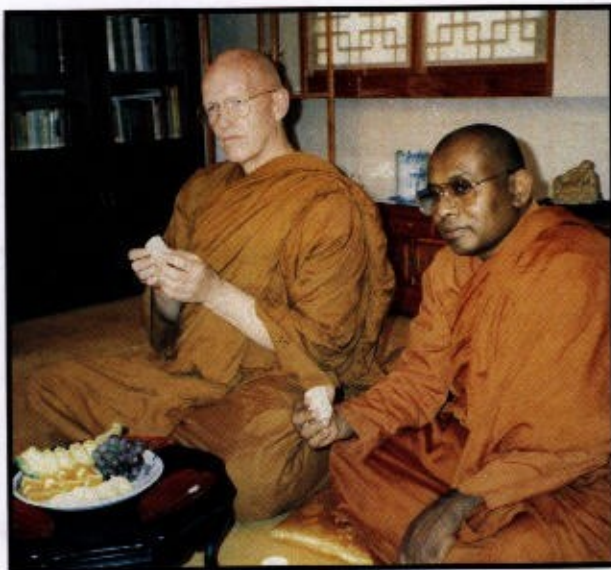
The late Ven. Sangharaja of Thailand



The late Ven. Fuji Gururji, founder of the
Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Order



The late Ven. Dr. Hammalawa Saddhatissa



Ven. Master Hsing Yun



Ven. Ajahn Sumedho

studying for the SSC exams he created a method where he would teach students who were also sitting for the same exam. During these evening classes he taught what he had learned at the same time. When he was sitting for the HSC exams he taught the students History, Literature and Buddhist Culture while studying the same subjects. He as well as his students all passed the exams this way.

As Kaleni caused frequent flooding in the surrounding areas, Ven. Piyananda worked hard to rescue people, find them shelter, and organize the distribution of food.

During this time he also helped his two younger brothers and younger sister as well. One younger brother was admitted to the Horana Vidyaratna Pirivena while the other one was found a place at the Papiliyana Sunetradevi Pirivena. The younger sister was brought to Colombo and a place was found for her to stay with some friends while she attended classes at the Stafford College. He not only helped his own siblings, he also helped a lot of other poor village children by finding them places in many temples while they attended schools in Colombo and its suburbs. They were also encouraged and taught to earn a livelihood whereby they could give tuitions to others. All these poor village children are now in very good places in society thanks to Venerable Piyananda's initiative. Some have become excellent speakers.

In October of 1963, Venerable Piyananda entered the Vidyalkara University. While he was attending the University, Venerable Piyananda was staying at the Wellampitiya temple, and the distance to the campus was four miles. A generous Dayaka (a layman attending the temple) was giving him a donation of ten rupees a month, but this was not enough to pay for the bus fare and food. So the young Venerable opted to walk the four miles through the countryside of Sedawatta. Those days he would start his journey at 6 a.m. in the morning since the classes commenced at 8 a.m. While on the way to the campus, he studied the Asoka Sila Lekhana (writings of Great Emperor Asoka, which were originally carved on stone slabs) and the Sandesha Kavyas such as Hansa

and Gira Sandeshas. He would recite the poems out loud and memorize them as he walked through the countryside. He thereby made use of the time and the surroundings productively to memorize so many valuable facts that helped him greatly in his studies.

During Ven. Piyananda's first year in the university, he wrote the book, "Sagayanaha Nikayabhedaya" (Buddhist Sects and Councils), which became a popular book at the time. Even today, it is a well-known reference book on the subject.

In 1964 he was selected to do a BA Honors degree in three subjects. He wanted to study Buddhist Culture for his Honors program but there weren't enough funds to study the three-year program. The regular degree would need only two more years but the specialized studies needed additional money for an additional year. So, Ven. Piyananda went to the Sri Lanka Vidyalyaya in Maradana to speak to the Buddhist monk in charge of the college, Ven. Baddegama Wimalawansa. This was a priest from down south and during the weekends when Venerable Piyananda went to the classes at Stafford he had gone to these college premises for his lunch. Whenever he went there Venerable Wimalawansa treated him very kindly and they had long conversations of value. This time, Venerable Piyananda explained his situation - how he needed money for the three-year Honors program, how he would like to teach a class at the Vidyalyaya to earn that money. Venerable Wimalawansa said that he could give him the money for the university classes, that there was no need for him to teach at the college. But Venerable Piyananda insisted on working for his money. Therefore, Venerable Wimalawansa made the necessary arrangements so that Venerable Piyananda could earn his tuition by teaching part time at Sri Lanka College in Maradana..

While overcoming his many financial obstacles, Ven. Piyananda placed second in the Sri Jawaharlal Nehru Inter-University Oratory Contest that was organized by the government of India in 1965, and first the following year. During his university days the Ven. Piyananda was politically active, working with the late Mr. Phillip Gunawardena, the leader of the socialist

movement. He graduated, passing his final exams with honors in 1967, and joined the staff at Sri Lanka College fulltime.

The Ven. Kotagama Wacchissara, a great learned monk and orator was Venerable Piyananda's role model. In 1969 Venerable Wacchissara was taken for surgery to the Colombo Hospital. There he had gone into a coma from an overdose of anesthesia from which he never woke up. The classes that were given earlier by Venerable Wacchissara at the Vidyodaya campus then became Ven. Piyananda's duty and he accepted this responsibility as a visiting lecturer resigning from Sri Lanka College. At this time Ven. Piyananda was also teaching at Colombo University as a visiting lecturer.

In 1970, he entered the political arena on behalf of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake (who was the widow of the assassinated Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake). Mrs. Bandaranayake became the first Woman Prime Minister in the world (before Indira Gandhi in India or Golda Meyer in Israel). Venerable Piyananda traveled all over the country on behalf of the University academic staff and stood in front of audiences at over 130 political rallies. His oratorical skills definitely helped Mrs. Bandaranayake in her victories.

In 1971 the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the People's Liberation Front was becoming noticed as a revolutionary group that believed in an armed struggle to change the country's political situation. There were students on all campuses who were following these left-leaning ideologies. They wanted an armed revolution like the ones in Russia and China to revolutionize the social system. Venerable Piyananda often argued with these students that an armed struggle was not the answer. (His cousin Ariya Bulegoda was one of the leaders who in the early 90's worked successfully to get them to change the "means" by which they would achieve their "ends." They later were successful at making peaceful positive changes through the democratic process.). The Lord Buddha had preached that violence only begets violence. Venerable Piyananda argued that the island of Sri Lanka, surrounded by the Indian Ocean, was such a small place that it

would never receive foreign aid or recognition for an armed revolution. Ven. Piyananda argued that a Buddhist country where people believed in non-violence, could not be ruled with bloodshed.

In April of 1971 Venerable Piyananda was in charge of over 40 Bhikkhu (monk) students who were going on a study tour (and a sort of a pilgrimage as well) to Buddhist holy places in the north and east part of the country. This was to study the archeological and cultural sites in those areas. This was an annual archeological journey which Ven. Piyananda was in charge of. Earlier communications had been made with the Government Agents of the areas they were visiting to get permission to do archeological studies and research.

On the 5th of April the group was at the Nagavihara temple in Jaffna (in the northern most part of the island). Around 8 p.m. on this humid night everyone went to sleep on mats in the corridors as well as outside on the cool floors. Venerable Piyananda saw some young men walking outside looking at wristwatches. He did not think there was anything out of the ordinary about this, because the revolutionaries or terrorists were never identified this way. Around 2 a.m. the police surrounded the premises and woke up everyone who was sleeping. Earlier in the evening, the Venerable had spoken to the Government Agent of Jaffna, one Mr. Amarasekera, who happened to be someone from his village. Also, the director of education in the region was very well known to the Venerable from his university student days. With Venerable Piyananda were two other staff members Venerable Gantune Assaji and Dr. Ariyapala Perera. When the police wanted to take the whole group into custody Dr. Perera argued with the police.

Venerable Piyananda did not realize the gravity of the situation as the more than 40 students along with the three staff members were taken to the Jaffna Police station. When they reached the police station and were herded out of the police jeeps they had to step over several dead bodies lying in the compound. Venerable Piyananda counted eight corpses. These were some of the revolutionaries that had come to attack the

police station earlier that night. The JVP revolutionaries all over the island had arisen in an armed attack of police stations everywhere that night. Some of the attackers were known to have donned Buddhist monks' robes, and some were suspected of living like monks. So, being a Buddhist monk at such a time was a reason to be a suspect in the eye of the police. Especially when there were 40 of them in a place like Jaffna! The police definitely thought that the monks from the university were part of the revolutionary group.

One of the police inspectors at the Jaffna station was an old student of Venerable Kotagama Wacchissara at Ananda College. Even so, Ven. Piyananda had to prove their innocence.

He told him that he knew the Government Agent Mr. Wimal Amarasekera who was also originally from the village of Walpola. However the agent would only vouch for Ven. Piyananda, whom he knew personally, to be released but not the others. It was known that some students from the Vidyodaya were already involved with the revolutionary activities. As a matter of fact, even in Jaffna, there were several police stations that were attacked by students from the Vidyodaya campus. At the time the Chief of Education in Jaffna was Mr. Mahathanthila, an old friend of the Venerable. When he heard about the monks at the police station Mr. Mahathanthila came and wrote a letter vouching for the innocence of the monks. He said that in case the group was stopped by other police barriers all along the way to Colombo, they were to show this letter of authority to anyone asking for identification.

Even with this letter when they started the journey back, in the rented "Ebert Silva" bus, the monks were checked by several army officers along the route. The army officers looked at the ankles and heels of the monks to see whether there were any marks and cuts left by shoes on their feet. The ones in the revolutionary group who pretended to be monks would have been wearing shoes all their lives, thus would have scars and marks from wearing shoes while the real monks only wore slippers or went barefoot.

By the time they reached the sacred area of Dambulla, curfew had been declared and the group could not go any further that evening. So they decided to spend the night in Dambulla. Seeing that the preaching hall was occupied by students who were very involved with JVP activities at the Peradeniya campus, Ven. Piyananda took his group to the temple on the higher ground (Uda Pansala). That night two other groups of students lead by the Venerable's former professors named Basnayake and Premathilaka also stayed at the upper temple grounds. There they were able to talk and enjoy discussions throughout the evening.

With many obstacles all along the route the bus made its way to Colombo. As a result of writing his letter, Mr. Mahathanthila, the Education Director, was suspended from his duties for allowing a suspected bunch of revolutionary students to escape from police custody. Venerable Piyananda had to take immediate action. He gathered all the information he could about the trip - the names of the students, their identities, letters to and from the Government Agents from the areas they visited, all the receipts from the places where they had their meals. All this came to a 40 page file which he presented to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranayake. After considering these facts, the Prime Minister reinstated Mr. Mahathanthila with a promotion to be the Chairman of the Board of Educational Book Publications.

By this time, Venerable Piyananda had still not received his higher ordination. When a person first trains to become a monk, he is called a Samanera, a novice. A novice takes only 10 precepts. While being a Samanera, the new monk studies the Buddhist texts and memorizes a lot of Pirith (Buddha's discourses that are chanted on all occasions.) The novice also has to know at least 15 Vaggas (Chapters) of the Dhammapada (the twin verses). Only then one could receive the higher ordination. Venerable Piyananda had learned all his stanzas and texts as a young Samanera and he could have received his higher ordination in 1964. But there were two things that held him back. One was that his revered teacher was gravely ill. Usually, the higher ordination was done in the

presence of the teacher monk if he is still alive. Another reason for the delay for his higher ordination was the problem he had with the Siyam Nikaya (sect) that he was a part of. He felt that they were discriminatory so he was protesting.

A highly educated monk, Venerable Walpola Rahula, advised Venerable Piyananda not to bang his head against a granite rock. He said this was a foolish thing to do. The traditional forces were too powerful for him to battle alone. Venerable Walpola Rahula himself had delayed his own ordination until he was 65 years old and this had hindered his own progress. Venerable Kotagama Wacchissara was also advising Venerable Piyananda to attain his higher ordination as soon as possible. But then, Venerable Wacchissara died unexpectedly from an overdose of anesthesia at the hospital before undergoing surgery, and Venerable Piyananda's old teacher also succumbed to his long illness. So in 1970, Venerable Piyananda received his higher ordination in the Kotte Paarshawa (section).

While still teaching at the University, the Venerable gave a large portion of his salary to educate poor children. In October of 1972, he received a Commonwealth Scholarship to the University of Calcutta in India.

The Masters program in India was supposed to be finished in two years, but the course took him four years because of the strikes and unrests in India. During this period, he made maximum use of his time: he worked with Mother Teresa and helped Venerable Neluwe Jinaratana who was the General Secretary of the Mahabodhi Society in India. Venerable Piyananda worked as the secretary to the elder monk and helped to solve many problems relating to the Mahabodhi Society.

In 1976, (after spending 4 years in India finally completing the Masters Program) the Venerable returned to Sri Lanka with Venerable Neluwe Jinaratana. He told me that he went to see my uncle, C.D.A. Gunawardhana (my mother's older brother) at the Neboda tea estate, where he was spending the last days of his life. [Author's note: My uncle was known to have helped a lot of Buddhist monks and the Sasana with

his untiring selfless work. In this life, I feel very blessed to have been born into such a family and to have parents who were very dedicated Buddhists. I thank them and give them merit, for bringing me up in such a way that I could write a valuable article like this.]

Having completed his Masters, Venerable Piyananda wanted to continue his education in America, where he also looked forward to teaching Buddhism. Many people were resistant to his desire to go to America fearing that he would not remain a monk. But he was determined to go and while on his way to America he met Dr. Ananda Guruge, who encouraged the young monk to follow his dream.

As a young forward-looking monk in Sri Lanka, he was involved in politics with his great oratorical skills. Mr. Neil de Alwis from Baddegama, who later became the acting Minister of Finance, asked Venerable Piyananda to give up his robes to devote his life totally to politics. He was offered the Baddegama parliamentary seat organizer if he would leave the saffron robes. But the Venerable refused this offer. His mother also said, that Ministerships do not last long but a monk is always a monk. When the Venerable visited Mr. Philip Gunawardena, one of the opposition leaders who had lost his seat in the elections, he also advised Venerable Piyananda not to fall into the political trap. He had said sadly, "Now, look, I am the leader of the People's Alliance. I was a minister. But who cares anymore? Nobody even comes to see me. Even if you become a great big minister in politics it is all-temporary. Being a monk you are always a monk and the whole world will always respect you."

Off to America

In December of 1976, Venerable Walpola Rahula suggested that Venerable Piyananda go to Chicago and attend Northwestern University to study Christianity with Methodist ministers in order to understand other religions and philosophies. When the Venerable went there, he said that no one at the school tried to convert him except a Ugandan and a Korean who were both fundamentalists. He was invited to attend

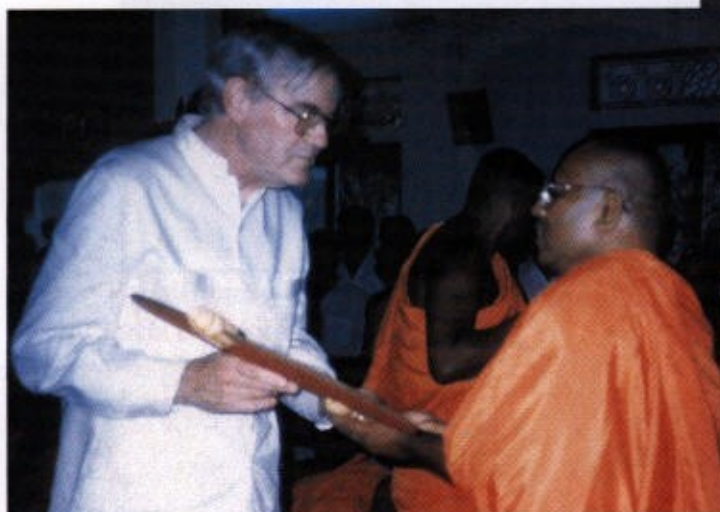
Most Venerable Mahanayaka of Kotte Chapter joined with the Sangha Sabha to confirm the title of Chief Sangha Nayaka of America to Bhante Piyananda.



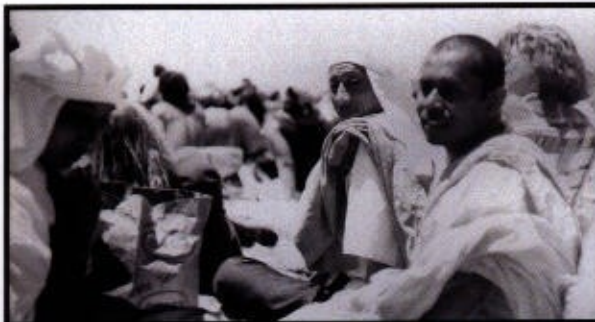
Bhante Piyananda and Bhante Seelawimala Celebrate 25 years of service in the U.S.



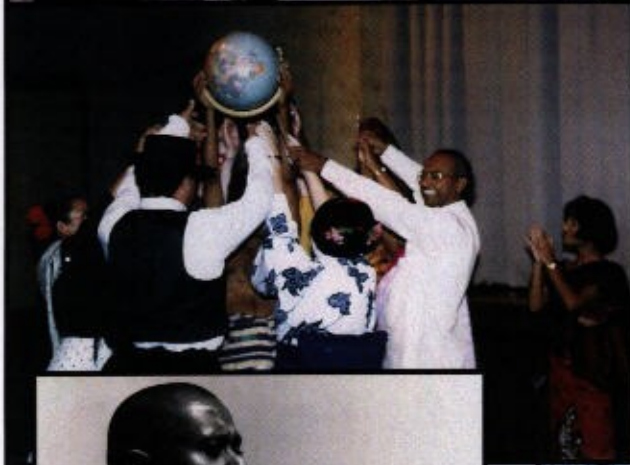
Receiving an award from the Korean Buddhists



Then U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Mr. John Reed offers an award for Chief Sangha Nayake of America.



Post 1992 Riot in Los Angeles



Bhante gives glasses to the Health Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. P. Dayaratne to distribute to needy people.



Over the years Bhante has gone forth to share the Buddha's teaching with the people of his adopted country.

the church services every Sunday by one of the professors, Dr. Edmund Perry. He attended, comporting himself as a true Buddhist monk; making sure that his head was well-shaven, that his robes were in order, and always living like a true disciple of the Buddha. He stayed in Chicago for two years (1977 thru 1978) and completed the Masters program. While he was there he helped the Thai community with their spiritual needs.

He returned to Los Angeles because of the spiritual needs of the local Sri Lankan community. Most of this is documented in the accompanying article on the history of Dharma Vijaya, but I would like to share a few memories with the readers.

During the time Venerable was having difficulties with the Beechwood Temple Dayaka Sabha, he made a trip to Sri Lanka. When Venerable Piyananda returned to the Beachwood temple one of the chief Dayakas asked him why he was back. Then, those who did not want him back had a restraining order against him at the police station.

Two young Sri Lankan men came and threatened the Venerable and asked him to leave the temple immediately. But Venerable stood his ground and made the young men leave the temple instead. When a young American staying at the New Hampshire temple heard about this, he talked about this unfairness to a Vietnamese monk. Through him, the news went to an unusual character known as the "Dharma Protector". This was a six and a half foot tall leader of a motorcycle gang. His nickname was "Vinyl". Vinyl wore a helmet with a tiger's head upon it. He claimed that he had an M.A. in Psychology. He was the self-appointed "Protector of the Dhamma."

So, one morning, Vinyl showed up at the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple on Beachwood Boulevard in Hollywood. Ven. Piyananda and Venerable Ananda were chanting pirith in the inner chamber. They were getting ready to leave the premises with their few belongings and move to a Vietnamese temple till they could find another place to live. They were planning to get a taxi and make this move. Venerable Ratanasara was already staying at

the Laotian temple for the time being. Apparently the Dayakas had won their case against Venerable Piyananda. Two of the Dayakas had come to take an inventory of the things at the temple such as valuable Buddhist books and relics.

Suddenly there was Vinyl at the door with a big dog about two feet tall on one side of him and a teenage girl on his other side. He yelled at the two men taking the inventory, thinking that they had come to threaten the monks. When Vinyl shouted, the dog began to bark, and the two men asked for an ID from Vinyl. Vinyl threw his driver's license at them and said, "Here, you can have it. Take it to the police if you want. But remember that I know the schools that your kids attend. And I will take my revenge on all of you, for I am the Dharma protector!" The two men were shivering by now and the two monks came out of the inner chamber upon hearing all the commotion. One of the men asked Venerable Piyananda why he had organized gangsters to harm them. Ven. Piyananda talked to Vinyl, saying that these men were actually helping him and not to harm them. But in any case, after that, the monks were never bothered, by those Dayakas.

Before, though, there were several instances, where those that were helping Venerable Piyananda were threatened by the others. Damage had been done to their automobiles, tires were slashed. One of those opposing him had threatened that all he needed to do was to give someone \$25 and bottle of booze and he'd have "Piyananda thrown out of the temple." But now there was a "Dharma Protector" who wanted Venerable Piyananda safe. Now those threatening him and his friends stopped their activities. Please see the accompanying article for the rest of the history.

Bhante's Teaching and Work in America

Venerable Piyananda had learned meditation from Mr. S. N. Goenka in India. In addition to that he was also advised by Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayake Thera in 1973 in Calcutta to practice meditation on loving kindness. According to

the Maha Thera if someone meditates on Loving Kindness (Maitree Bhavana) even for ten minutes every day at the exact same time, one can develop psychic powers. This meditation has to be done exactly at the same time, daily for about three months to get these results. This also purifies one's mind as well as heals the body.

Venerable Piyananda uses two methods of Maitree Bhavana, which he taught us at a Buddhism class I was teaching in Murietta through the elder hostel program. Fifty-seven seniors who had come to my college class from all over the States and some from England and Canada, all followed and learned these techniques from him that day. In one method he said the words "May I be well, happy, peaceful and prosperous. May no harm come to me. May no difficulties come to me. May no problems come to me. May I have patience, courage, and understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems and failures in life." In the same way you make this wish for your parents, your teachers, relatives, friends and even enemies. Then you wish all this goodness on all beings seen and unseen.

In the second method of meditation you use visualization. You create an aura in the heart and send it throughout the body. Then while saying the words of loving-kindness you project this light (aura) to the entire room you are in, and to those in the room with you (seen and unseen). Gradually you send it out to the surroundings, to the city, to the state, to the entire country, to the neighboring country, to the entire world and then to the entire universe. In the same manner, step by step you come back to yourself and hold the aura of loving-kindness within you.

A lot of Thai business people and restaurant owners believe in Ven. Piyananda's power of chanting Pirith. They always invite him to their restaurants for Dana (Alms giving) and Venerable chants Pirith and blesses everyone. They know for a fact that when he does this blessing, business picks up and prospers. The day before the riots in Los Angeles, he had gone to a Thai restaurant named "Ocha" to chant Pirith. He also blessed the place with holy water (water over which Pirith had been

chanted). The next day when the riots erupted, all the buildings next to the restaurant on both sides were destroyed in the ensuing fire, except for Ocha restaurant where Venerable Piyananda had done the blessing! He does not consider this as his personal power, but as the power of Pirith.

Conclusion

And he is not tiring in his efforts. He lives according to the Buddha's teachings. He works with full effort, diligently with mindfulness. He lives humbly with controlled senses. He lives a spiritual life that makes him shine. He does not believe in being a slave to karma. He does not believe in being subdued by others' gossip. Every opposition he treats as a challenge. And with every challenge he steps forward.

When Venerable Piyananda was small, a well-known astrologer named Hendrik De Silva Hettigoda (Ven. Walpola Rahula's brother) read his horoscope. He gave the young monk some good advice. He told him never to say "no" and "I cannot" but to go forward without fear. He told him that in this way he could become a king in this world. These words have come true in Venerable Piyananda's life.

Ven. Piyananda advises young monks to read more and discuss the Dhamma. If one reads and studies the Tripitaka {the three sections of the Buddha Dhamma: the Suttas (discourses), the Vinaya (rules of conduct), and the Abhidhamma (Buddhist metaphysics)} one can live happily, do a great service to the society and die happily. He says when he studies Christianity he sees the value of Buddhism more and more.

Venerable Piyananda travels extensively throughout the world sharing the Buddha's teaching with everyone he meets. He advises young people to read about heroes and not about fallen characters. As a young lad he had read all of Piyadasa Sirisena's novels. He says that all the characters in those books were positive. This has always helped him have a positive outlook on life. He always remembers a Shloka (poem) from the ancient text Hitopadesha, which says,

Many hands join together to help prepare for



VESAK

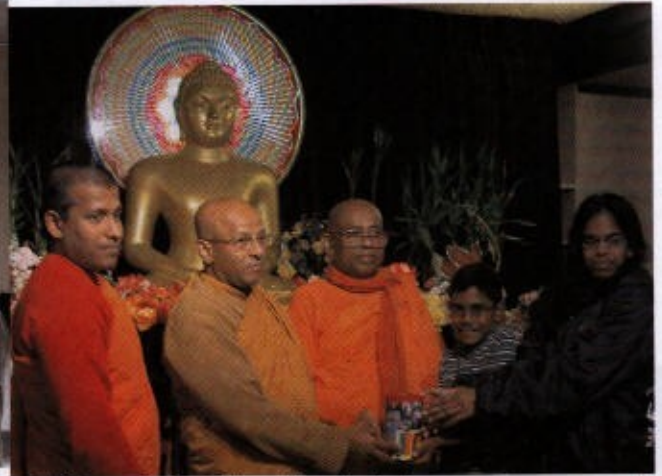
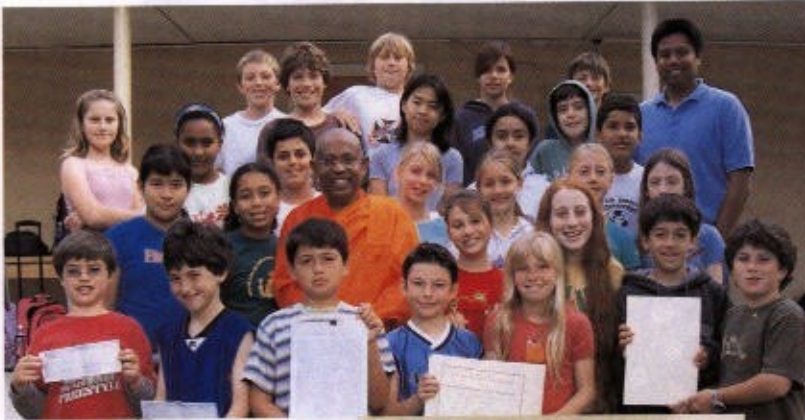
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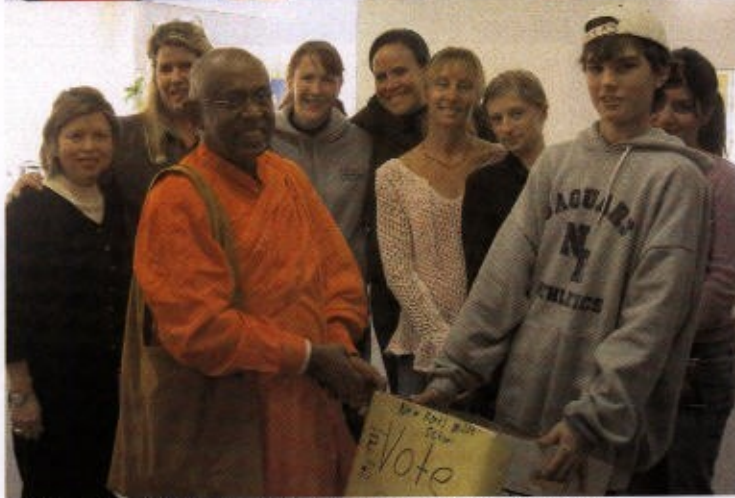
KATHINA



AFTER THE TSUNAMI HIT SRI LANKA



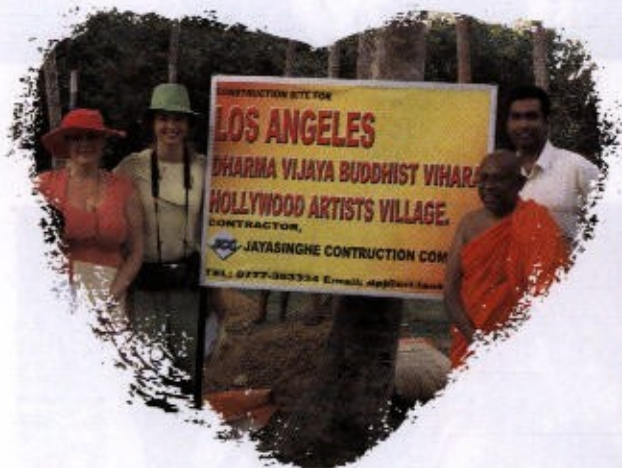
Many children joined together to help us raise money to build houses for those in need.



Many friends like Ana Kadin and Tracy Rice helped with school visits.

Long time friends like Sir Arthur Clarke and

Camille Celluci of Hollywood Artist Alliance joined with new found friends like Tess Cacciatore of World Trust Foundation to help.



Members of the fundraising committee, the Tillakaratne family visited the construction site this August with Mr. Mangala Jayasinghe, our contractor.



"Do not give into fate, and always work diligently. If you strive hard and do the best you can, then even if things do not go right what is wrong with that?"

I wish Venerable Walpola Piyananda a long, healthy, and prosperous life, and may no harm come to him so that he can continue to help thousands of others, just as he has done so far in his illustrious, spiritual life.

BHADRAJI MAHINDA JAYATILAKA is the author of seventy-six (76) books. He writes on various subject matter including, Buddhism, spirituality and healing. He is an instructor in theater and art media at Mt. San Jacinto College in California. Among his translated works are: Jesus Lived In India, Light of Asia, Journey of Souls, Souls' Journey, and recently he translated Venerable Walpola Piyananda's "Saffron Days in LA" into Sinhala under the title "Amerikave Kasaawatha"

"Saffron Days in LA" Published by Shambala Publishers, USA

"Amerikave Kasaawatha"- Published by Dayawansa Jayakody, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.

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*"Go forth, O monks, for the benefit and happiness of the many,  
for the good of the world, for the welfare and happiness of devas  
& people! Let not the two of you go the same way.*

*Preach the doctrine that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful in  
the middle, & beautiful in its ending. Declare the holy life in its purity,  
completely, both in its spirit and letter.*

*Those beings with dust in their eyes will decline for not having heard  
the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma."*

Vinaya 1:20



# The Dharma Vijaya Community Speaks

We asked some of our long time members and friends to contribute a few words about the double anniversary. Unfortunately space won't allow us to print all of them, but here is what a few of them had to say.

## A Radiant Goodness

Jim Ellison

One early summer evening in 1976, on the lawn outside the International Buddhist Meditation Center in downtown Los Angeles, I came upon a group of mostly American born visitors and residents, who had gathered for discussion. I, too, was a resident, just starting down the Buddhist path. Soon after I joined this gathering, the group and the world around it seemed to shrink into the background till just one person remained. Perhaps it was his saffron robe, or his then almost incomprehensible accent, or even the wisdom of his words, but I don't think so. For me at least, something else profoundly distinguished this young monk from everything and everyone around him – he quite simply and inexplicably radiated goodness!

I later found that this humble, soft-spoken Sri Lankan monk had come here in part to study and understand Christianity. Whatever his purpose, he was already the embodiment of loving kindness, the living example of peace within and love for all. Blessed with remarkable intelligence, great wisdom, open-minded tolerance, unflinching common sense, inspiring leadership, and a quiet sense of humor, Bhante Piyananda has grown, achieved, and contributed beyond any dreams of 28 years ago. I have seen him sustain great injustice and loss with equanimity and perfect detachment, only to rise to far greater achievement. Yet, at every point in which his life and mine have intersected, I have been overwhelmed and humbled by his ineffable, unbounded goodness, so brilliant to my mind's eye and so beautiful to my heart's delight – and so apparent to each of us whose life he has touched and blessed.

\* \* \*

## What is Tolerance?

Amali Jayasinghe

*Voltaire: "What is tolerance? -- it is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other's folly -- that is the first law of nature."*

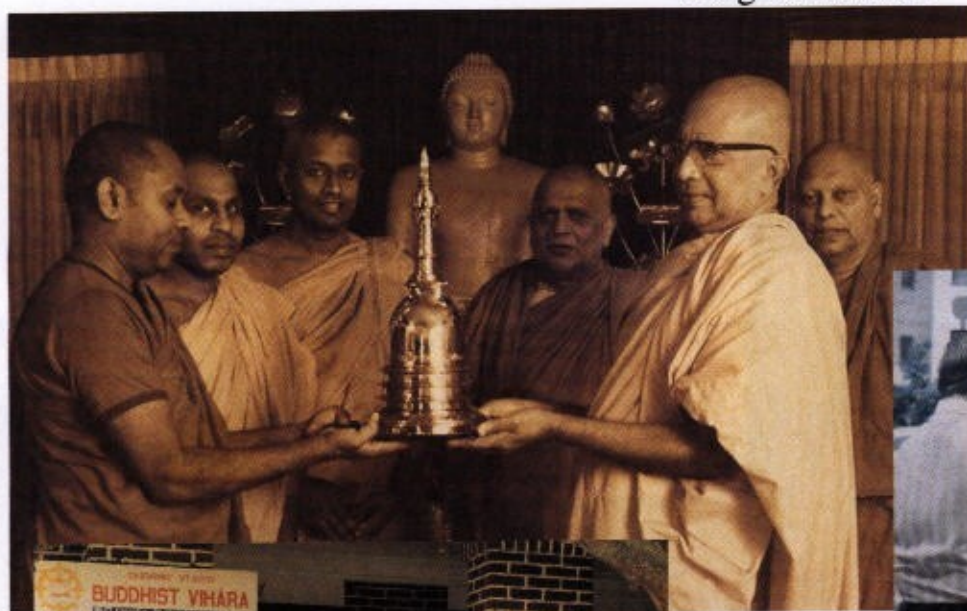
Perhaps the greatest teaching I have learned from my weekly childhood visits to my temple on Crenshaw Blvd. was the lesson of tolerance.

While the temple was founded by Sri Lankan monks and lay people, it has always welcomed non-Sri Lankans. As a small child, I saw a diversity of people frequenting the temple. During Vesak time, we excitedly awaited eating the Thai cuisine prepared by the Dharma Vijaya's Thai supporters. I also recall the role of prominent Americans in the leadership of the temple. Though I associated Buddhism with my Sri Lankan culture, I witnessed its importance in the lives of non-Sri Lankans.

As a teenager, I was privileged to represent the temple at an Inter-religious Council breakfast for the inaugural celebration of former Mayor Riordan. The temple's membership in the Inter-religious Council of southern California struck me at the time as an inspiring message – "We, the monks, are committed to solving the problems of our community by working in unison with other religious groups such as Catholics, Jews, Hindus and so on". I boasted to one of my Jewish friends about the friendly and cooperative spirit the temple shared with the local Jewish community. This spirit of tolerance took shape when the Dalai Lama visited Los Angeles in 2002. Unable to provide an appropriate venue, the temple hosted the Dalai Lama at a large Jewish synagogue.

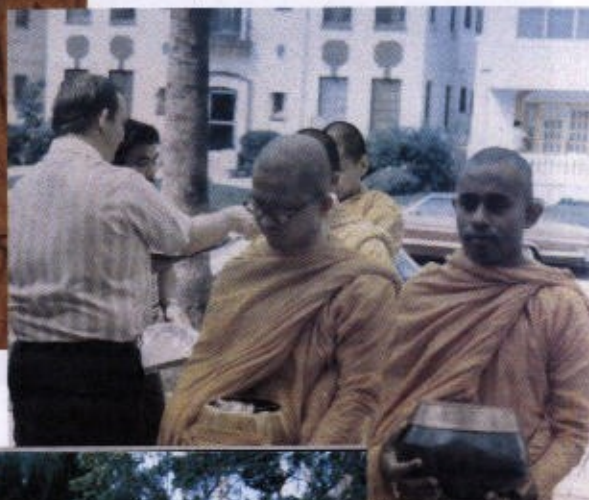


# A Few More Pictures... Sangha members



Buddha relics offered by  
Ven. Walgammulle Pannarama  
Nayaka Maha Thera to the temple  
in 1989.

1<sup>st</sup> Pindapata in LA, 1976



Sumedhananda leads Pindapata, 1990



Special Dana  
Ceremony in  
1997.





A Few More Pictures...

Some of our

Devotees





Though tolerance is a central tenet of Buddhism, I could not have learned this lesson without the guidance of the Dharma Vijaya's chief abbot, Venerable Walpola Piyananda. Ven. Piyananda not only preaches tolerance, he practices it. Through his visionary leadership, he shaped the Dharma Vijaya Temple into a modern day Buddhist institution able to thrive on this American soil. Through his words and actions, he is a role model to so many of us who have been fortunate enough to know him. His lessons in tolerance are especially pertinent for the young adult growing up in America today where one must learn tolerance of ethnic variation, political ideology, sexual orientation and so much more.

These small lessons learned within the walls of this spacious house converted into a temple under the tutelage of this humble monk, have proven to be the most valuable lessons for me in my life as a young Sri Lankan American. I am so honored to have been amongst the first students of this special monk and his extraordinary temple.

\* \* \*

### **Meaning of Buddhism in my life Mihiri Uthpala Tillakaratne**

Buddhism is an integral part of my life. It always has been and always will be. Buddhism has taught me to live my life by reasoning things out for myself and not by following what others may claim. It also has taught me to be compassionate towards myself and others, to give, to have patience, to maintain a positive attitude towards life, and to realize that all things are impermanent. Buddhism taught me to overcome selfishness and attachment and to express a compassionate concern for the welfare of others.

My strong Buddhist background would not have been possible without the influence of Los Angeles Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara and its venerable monks, especially abbot Ven. Walpola Piyananda. I was told that Ven. Piyananda and other venerable monks

had chanted pirith when my parents first brought me to the temple after I was born, directly from the hospital even before taking me home. The thin piece of copper sheet on which the Ratna Sutta pirith is printed was my first gift, which I treasure to date. Before I left for college two weeks ago, I received blessings from the temple. I brought the copper sheet with me to my dorm room along with a Buddha statue. I have been in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for about a month now and have not been able to find a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple nearby. I now understand how lucky I was living in Los Angeles in the close proximity to so many great Buddhist temples.

Coming to Sunday school taught me not only Buddhist teachings, Buddhist traditions, and moral values, but it also taught me Sri Lankan culture and the Sinhala language. At a young age when I still couldn't read, in Dhamma (Sunday) School, I studied the life of Buddha and Jataka stories through videos. With time, I learned devotional gatha, loving kindness meditation, and Suttas such as Sigalovada and Mangala. Dhamma school sparked my interest in Buddhism, which led me to attend the Buddhist philosophy/psychology series at the temple taught by Ven. Madawala Punnaaji and enrolling in Buddhism classes at the University of California, Los Angeles. Ven. Punnaaji looked at Buddhist teachings with the perspective of a scientific view point, modern psychological theories, as well as in comparison to other philosophies. These dharma classes expanded my knowledge and had a great impact on my reasoning. Now as a freshman at Harvard, I am studying Pali and Sanskrit, which will give me an excellent opportunity to read the Buddhist canon, and get closer to the origins of Buddhism and its revered philosophy.

I remember running around on the temple grounds with other kids while waiting for Sunday School to start. I remember the joy of making Vesak lanterns and seeing it swing gently on Vesak evening, the devotional songs we sang on the steps of the Bodhi tree. Serving monks walking on Pindapatha on Katina ceremony day, listening to all night Maha Pirith - all these things are part of my



Buddhist upbringing which I will cherish for the rest of my life.

On this great occasion of commemorating the 25 years the Dharma Vijaya temple has been in existence and the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Ven. Walpola Piyananda Thera's ordination, I feel privileged to write these few words to congratulate these two for their lasting contribution to the community. I offer my congratulations and best wishes to Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara and Ven Piyananda Thera for the remarkable service rendered to the Southern California community.

\* \* \*

**Bhante Piyananda's  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination  
By Bodhicari Dharmapala  
(Stephen Long)**

I've learned many lessons from Bhante Piyananda during our ten-year friendship. Many of them I learned during the six months I worked with him editing his book, Saffron Days in LA. However, the most important lesson I ever learned from him was shortly after I met him, when he demonstrated by his actions exactly what it means to accept someone as part of a spiritual brotherhood.

From the very beginning, when I first started coming to the temple for meditation practice, Bhante Piyananda and the other monks at Dharma Vijaya made me feel included as one of their own. Not only was I warmly welcomed at the temple, but soon I found myself being an actual part of the monks' inner circle - like a "brother" of equal status. As I expanded my participation in temple activities, I was often called upon as an "insider" whenever my energy could serve the group. I've always been grateful to Bhante Piyananda for creating and encouraging an environment of spiritual brotherhood that was and is so inclusive of everyone present.

At my first ordination as a lay minister, Bhante Piyananda and Bhante Chandawimala

gave me my Buddhist name, Dharmapala, which means "Protector of the Truth." That day I knew for sure that they had a special insight into my strong feelings about Buddhism. For many years I had considered myself a "Protector of the Sangha," understanding that the Dhamma, or Truth, has been transmitted from generation to generation by the monks ever since the Lord Buddha's lifetime. I sincerely believe that this 2,500 year-old unbroken lineage is one of the treasures of the Earth, and I will always do whatever I can to protect it and help keep it flourishing. Bhante Piyananda knows this about me, just as I know that Bhante Piyananda has been there to protect me countless times over the years by chanting, blessing, and supporting me in those activities he knows are my "life's work."

As a Bodhicari, I recently accompanied Bhante Piyananda to the International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak, in Bangkok, Thailand, at the UN Pacific Rim Headquarters. We participated with 1,500 monks from 42 countries in discussions regarding the Dhamma, and how it relates to the "real" world in which we live. Several times during the Conference I witnessed first-hand Bhante's dedication and devotion to fiercely protecting the Dhamma, and to insuring its appropriate dissemination wherever it might be shared.

I also observed Bhante's leadership among his fellow clergymen in the spiritual brotherhood of that great world-wide gathering of Buddhists. Wherever he went, other monks and lay persons gathered about him to engage him in conversation or to receive his blessing. I was most honored to be present at his side as Dharmapala, Protector of the Truth, Bodhicari from Dharma Vijaya in Los Angeles.

\* \* \*



## **A Life Well Lived: A Tribute to Ven. Walpola Piyananda Sama Dede Whiteside**

Ven. Wapola Piyananda's life is punctuated by many notable dates, and is illuminated by his unceasing kindness, generosity and caring nature. His life has been dedicated to living the Buddhadhamma and teaching it to all; young and old, male and female, rich and poor, kind and unhappy, without refusing anyone with a ceaseless energy rarely matched. "Attanam Upaman Karva"- making one's self the measure of comparison by example" certainly is the hallmark of Bhante Piyananda's life. Accessing the Buddha's career of service to humanity as Bhante's guide, Ven. Piyananda has led a remarkable life of thoughtful, loving and kind service to his fellow creatures.

One of the notable dates, Oct. 2nd, marks Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and also marks the birthday of Ven. Piyananda. Actually Bhante was born on September 29th, but it took his father several days to walk from his small village of Walpola to Galle in Sri Lanka in order to register his birth. The year was 1943.

At the age of 12, Bhante was ordained as a novice monk. He was given the name "Piyananda" meaning "Pleasant Joy" by his Master. This publication marks the 50th anniversary of this event, which occurred on October 26, 1955.

Bhante Piyananda came to America during the 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's birth in 1976. He arrived on July 4, 1976, the bicentennial celebration of the founding of the United States. He went straight from the airport to the San Francisco Bicentennial Parade. One can only imagine his thoughts as he waved from the float he was placed on to thousands of parade goers. And imagine those in the parade; as at that time only a couple of other Theravada Monks had arrived in America!

His own march to build a community that honors and celebrates many cultures began and continues to this day. While often temples stay within the confines of their respective cultures, Bhante expanded this

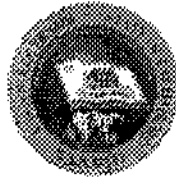
into a vision in which both Eastern and Western Buddhist traditions, as well as other religions were comfortable and encouraged to support and work together. His temple, Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, and others he helped to establish, are rare examples of many cultures coming together to learn from and support each other. This has allowed newly arrived persons from Asia to have a better support system from those seasoned with living in this culture, and those from the West to benefit from learning about Buddhism from those raised from childhood with the teachings. What a great example of Peace-Building!

Bhante rises early in the morning to begin the day in meditation and chanting, and ends it usually helping someone that arrived at the temple for refuge in the wee hours of the night. I have never, ever known him to complain, always eagerly meeting the occasion to help another with cheerfulness and thoughtfulness. His wings of compassion and eyes of wisdom have served to support a large community of monks, nuns, lay ministers, Buddhist devotees and non-Buddhists alike locally and literally around the world. Never have I known such unceasing ability to help others, while balancing compassion with the practical wisdom for which Bhante is known and celebrated.

Surely others will write about the many occasions in which Bhante served others, from the building of Buddhist temples across the country and world, to his loving help when the Boat People from Vietnam arrived in Los Angeles, to his recent efforts which is to build homes in Sri Lanka after the Tsunami last December. But I shall remember Bhante for the times he has helped one person at a time: no matter how busy, he always focuses his service in such a way that the recipient feels like the most important and only thing in Bhante's life.

And, so it is: Ven. Walpola Piyananda's life has been a true living example of the Buddha's infinite wisdom and endless compassion. May he be well and happy.





OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

September 19, 2005

***Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, Inc.***

I am pleased to extend warm greetings on the occasion of your Temple's 25th Anniversary and the 50th Anniversary of Ven. Walpola Piyananda's ordination.

Our great State distinguishes itself by the quality of its people who adhere to the high calling of community service. Thank you for devoting your time and energy to building a vibrant faith community in the Los Angeles community.

As you celebrate your double anniversary, I salute your dedication to supporting the spiritual growth of many Californians. Your love for others inspires us toward greater service and commitment.

Please accept my best wishes for a memorable celebration and every future success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arnold Schwarzenegger".

Arnold Schwarzenegger





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SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT

October 15-16, 2005

## Official Celebration

### **Ven. Dr. Walpola Piyananda**

Abbot & President of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara

Chief Sangha Nayake of America

President, Sri Lankan Sangha Council of United States & Canada

President, Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California

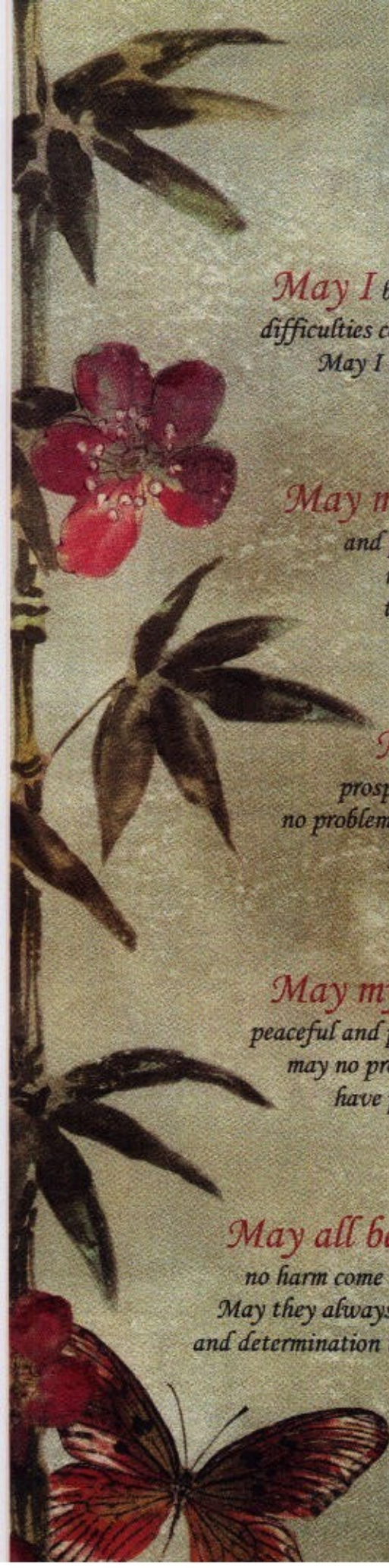
Member of Inter Religious Council of Los Angeles

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles and the 10 million people who reside in the 88 cities and 138 unincorporated communities of the County, it is my honor and pleasure to extend sincere congratulations upon the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your ordination as a Buddhist monk in you native Sri Lanka. Best wishes for a very successful and most memorable celebration.

Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor, Second District  
County of Los Angeles







## Loving Kindness Meditation

*May I* be well, happy, peaceful and prosperous. May no harm come to me; may no difficulties come to me; may no problems come to me. May I always meet with success. May I also have patience, courage, understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

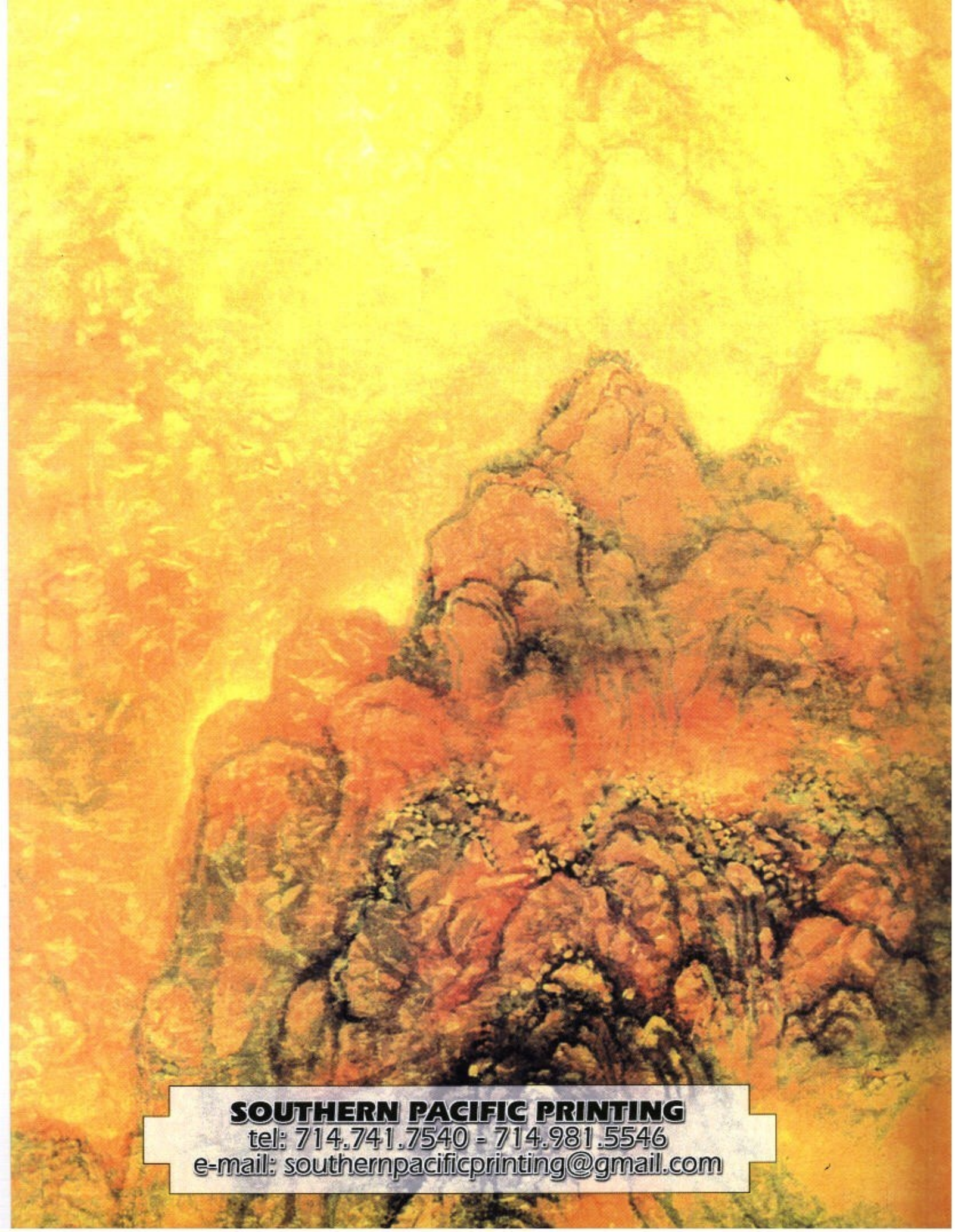
*May my parents, family and relatives* be well, happy, peaceful and prosperous. May no harm come to them, may no difficulties come to them; may no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

*May my teachers and friends* be well, happy, peaceful and prosperous. May no harm come to them, may no difficulties come to them; may no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

*May my enemies and those unfriendly to me* be well, happy, peaceful and prosperous. May no harm come to them, may no difficulties come to them; may no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.

*May all beings everywhere* be well, happy, peaceful and prosperous. May no harm come to them, may no difficulties come to them; may no problems come to them. May they always meet with success. May they also have patience, courage, understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life.





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