

Maya Puwath - මායා පුවත්

*Quarterly Newsletter of Mahamaya Girls' College
Alumnae Association of North America (MGCAANA)*
Volume 22– Issue 2 - April 2026



Message from the Editors

Dear Valued Readers,

We hope you enjoyed a joyful Sinhala and Tamil New Year surrounded by family and friends. We're thrilled to share this issue of Maya Puwath, featuring key details about the upcoming 22nd MGCAANA Annual General Meeting (AGM).

This year's AGM marks a special homecoming: after 21 years since our very first meeting, the 22nd MGCAANA AGM returns to Seattle, Washington. Our member, Ms Erandi Sooriyaarachchi, will graciously host the AGM and dinner for the second time. We can't wait to celebrate together and create new memories as a community. Please also remember to cast your vote for the new Board of Directors for the 2026–2027 term using the link provided in this issue.

In this edition, we are honored to include a beautiful tribute to Mrs. Shanmugavadivu Vaithilingham Selvarajan, a former teacher at Mahamaya, thoughtfully written by Ms. Geetha Selvendran. Our Art Corner continues to shine a light on the creativity within our community, showcasing the talents of our members and their families.

You'll also find important updates and announcements about MGCAANA's upcoming events. We encourage you to save the date and join us at the AGM. Your ongoing participation, support, and camaraderie are what make our community strong and meaningful.

Until we meet again, we wish you a safe, peaceful, and joy-filled spring season—may it bring renewal, warmth, and happiness to you and your loved ones

Warm regards,
Newsletter Committee

In this issue

- 22nd AGM Invitation
- 22nd AGM - Election of BOD for 2026/2027
- Article - A Tribute to Mrs. Shanmugavadivu Vaithilingham Selvarajan
- Art Corner
- MGCAANA news and more

Taṇhāya jāyatī soko,
taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṃ;
Taṇhāya vip̐pamuttassa,
natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ.

Craving gives rise to
sorrow; craving gives
rise to fear. For someone
released from craving,
there is no sorrow; so,
from what would fear
arise?

*Dhammapada
Verse 16
Piya Vagga*



22nd MGCAANA

Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Dinner

Saturday, May 23, 2026



AGM Time: 1.30 pm - 4.00 pm PST

**AGM Venue: Redmond Library,
15990 NE 85th St, Redmond, WA 98052**

Dinner: 6.00 pm PST onwards

**Dinner venue: Residence of
Erandi Suriyaarachchi
(11002 NE 104th St, Kirkland, WA 98033)**

22nd AGM - Election of BOD for 2026/2027

Voting is now open to appoint the next Board of Directors of MCGAANA for the year 2026/2027.

We are pleased to present the bios of the seven exceptional candidates nominated for the Board of Directors for the 2026/2027 term.

We kindly request you to review the attached candidate bios and cast your vote to elect our next Board of Directors.

Your vote is important in ensuring that MCGAANA continues to thrive and achieve its mission.

To vote, please go to <https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/9GXnofE8>

A



Omalka Chandrasiri

B



Risheeka Ekanayake

C



Amali Alawatta

D



Himashinie Diyabalanage

E



Senali Dissanayake

F



Nadeesha Jayawardana

G



Dasmanthie Chin

Article - A Tribute to Mrs. Shanmugavadivu Vaithilingham Selvarajan

Ms Lingham



Introduction

This tribute is written in loving memory of Mrs. Shanmugavadivu Vaithilingham Selvarajan — our beloved Ms. Lingham— who taught me and my classmates during our formative years at Mahamaya Girls' College. She was more than a teacher; she was a mentor, a guiding light, and an inspiration. Her dedication, discipline, and deep care for her students helped shape not only my life, but also the academic history of our school. It is with gratitude and affection that I share these memories of her remarkable life and the lasting mark she left on all of us.

A Tribute to Mrs. Shanmugavadivu Vaithilingham Selvarajan

Mrs. Shanmugavadivu Vaithilingham Selvarajan — fondly known to us as Ms. Lingham — was one of my favorite teachers at Mahamaya Girls' College. She taught Organic Chemistry and Zoology in my Advanced Level classes. Though she was at Mahamaya for only three years, from 1962 to 1965, she left a lasting impression on her students and was one of the pioneering science teachers during the early years of the College's science program.

At the time, I did not fully realize how much she had done for us. But over the past twenty years, I was fortunate to reconnect with her and get to know her beyond the classroom. She had moved with her husband, Mr. Selvarajan, to Canada in 1987, and in the early 2000, they visited us in South Florida, rekindling our friendship. Even after all those years, she was still my teacher — someone I respected and loved deeply. I had hoped to bring her to one of our Association's AGMs in Toronto, but sadly, that was not to be. She passed away on April 21, 2025.



Ms. Lingham was born in Malaysia as the fourth daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vaithilingham, who were originally from Sri Lanka. She had just graduated from the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, when she came to teach at Mahamaya.

In 1962 and 1963, our Advanced Level Science class had only twelve students. There was a shortage of science teachers at the time, and many young teachers came and went. I remember others such as Ms. Navaratnarajah (Botany), Mrs. Hema Dissanayake Selvaratnam (Chemistry), Ms. Saravanamuttu (Zoology), Miss Oomen (Physics), and Mrs. L.O.K. Perera (Geography), another favorite of mine.

The Principal, Mrs. Soma Pujitha Gunawardena, hired Ms. Lingham to fill the vacancy left by Ms. Saravanamuttu. Although she was young and lacked extensive teaching experience, her elegant and commanding presence quickly earned the students' respect. She was friendly and had a warm smile, but we were still a little scared of her. Students who might have played tricks on other teachers would never have dared to with Ms. Lingham. She was strict in the best possible way — and we soon realized she was an excellent teacher.

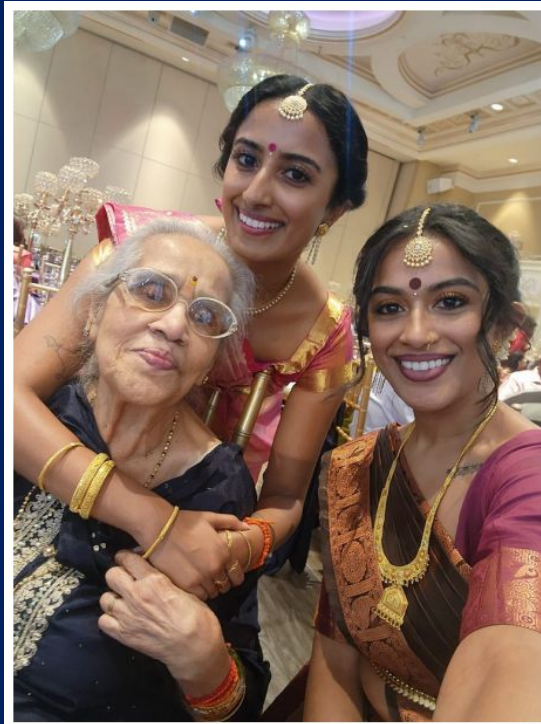
In the early 1960s, students were not always serious about studying, as it was widely believed that one needed to sit for the GCE Advanced Level at least twice to gain university entrance, especially in the science stream. Before 1964, only two girls from Mahamaya had entered medicine (in 1961 and 1963), and one had entered general science. The shortage of science teachers in Kandy and the relatively recent opening of the science faculty at Peradeniya in 1961 were also factors.

Ms. Lingham taught us both Zoology and Chemistry with great dedication. I still recall one incident vividly — the only time in my school years that I was reported to the Principal. At the time, I was a school prefect and the sports captain, heavily involved in athletics and netball tournaments, which often took me away from academic work. Just two weeks before our examinations, I was planning to travel with the junior team to the All-Island Finals in Colombo.

When I was summoned to the Principal's office, I was terrified — but relieved when she spoke to me kindly. She told me she had heard I was not paying enough attention to my studies. I told her I would not travel with the junior team, and in hindsight, I believe that decision changed my life.

Years later, while chatting with Ms. Lingham, I asked her why she had reported me. She told me that her father had been ill during her time at Mahamaya, but she had not gone to see him. When I asked why, she replied, "How could I leave you girls just before the exams when there was nobody else to teach two subjects?" That conversation was an eye-opener for me. Until then, I had never truly appreciated the depth of dedication and sacrifice our teachers gave so naturally.

That year — 1963/64 — proved to be a turning point for Mahamaya Girls' College. When I sat for the GCE Advanced Level, our class of twelve produced outstanding results: five girls entered Medical College and I entered the Faculty of Agriculture — 50% of the class, the best results in the district. It was a record for several reasons. Two of us, including myself, entered on our first attempt — a rare achievement at the time. Even more special was that my older sister Ganga, sitting for the second time, also entered Medical College. We both shared the same initials — G.P. Wijayapala.



Ms. Lingham with her beloved grand-daughters

I will never forget the day the results came. I was in a physical education class when the Principal unexpectedly walked in, holding a paper. Her presence in the classroom was unusual, and we all grew nervous. She spoke briefly to the teacher in charge and then came straight to me. She showed me the paper — my sister's name was there, and I was thrilled. But then I noticed the same name written again at the bottom, and wondered why. Only then did she tell me — the second name was mine!

That success marked the beginning of Mahamaya's rise in both academics and sports, and Ms. Lingham was one of the teachers who played an important role in making it possible. Her high standards, discipline, and unwavering commitment helped set the stage for generations of achievement.

She was more than just an educator — she was a mentor, a role model, and a steady guiding presence in our formative years. Her life and legacy will live on in the countless students she inspired. She will be remembered with love, respect, and deep gratitude.



Visiting Ms Lingham at her best friend's (Jayapathma) place in Kundasale

Written by Ms Geetha Selvendran

MGCCANA member Ayanthi Fernando's daughter Lahini was selected as a winner of the 11th Annual WRD Student Art Contest. Congratulations to Lahini! Her artwork will be placed in the month of November of the 2026 WRD Water Awareness Calendar.



Lahini W. - Grade 5
Wittmann Elementary School, Cerritos



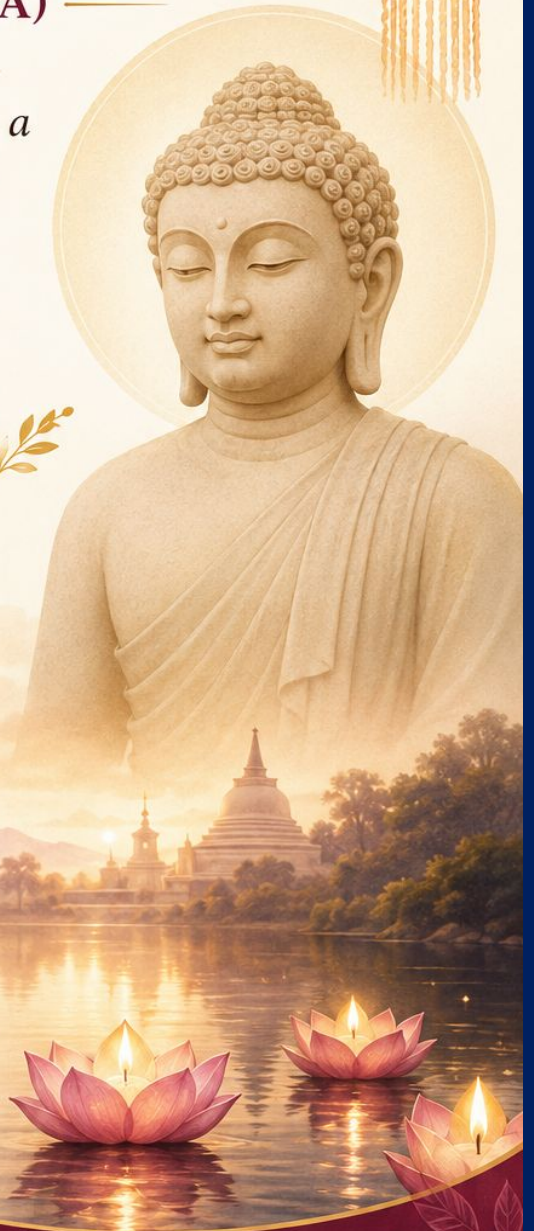
**Mahamaya Girls' College
Alumnae of North America
(MGCAANA)**

wishes all our members a
*peaceful and
meaningful*

Vesak
celebration.

As we remember Lord Buddha's
birth, his attainment of
Enlightenment (Nirvana), and
his passing into Parinirvana,
may this sacred day bring
peace, compassion, and
happiness to you and
your families.

Blessed
Vesak!



Reaching the New Goal **\$60,000** Set for Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF)

The Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF), set up by MGCAANA, provides financial aid to disadvantaged students at Mahamaya Girls' College. Scholarships from VSTF pay for educational expenses and boarding fees of students attending Mahamaya. "Vidya," a Sanskrit word, means knowledge or wisdom. Our initial goal was to raise \$20,000, which we achieved in 2018; The current goal is \$60,000.

The total amount collected for VSTF reached **\$58,806** as of April 2026.

To donate online or by cheque, please visit:

<http://mahamayaalumnina.org/vstf.php>

We value your donations - fulfilling our purpose of MGCAANA

According to Ms. Himashinie Diyabalanage (Co-chair, VSTF) - on behalf of the endowment committee and the VSTF Board of Trustees:

VSTF Announcements: We are excited to share that in 2025, the VSTF awarded **27 scholarships worth Rs 35,000 each**. These scholarships will support deserving students in pursuing their educational goals. Congratulations to the recipients and thank you to our sponsors and extinguish donors for making this possible.

https://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/VidyaTrustFund/MGCAANA_Vidya_Scholarship_Trust_Fund_Brochure.pdf

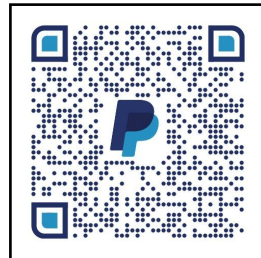
Renewing MGCAANA Membership for the Year 2026

Thank you to members who already renewed their membership for the year 2025/2026. If you have not renewed your membership yet, this is a friendly reminder to renew your membership to support MGCAANA's ongoing activities.

How can you renew your membership?

By Phone: Pay by Zelle to mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Online: Use your credit card via PayPal account to pay your membership fee through the MGCAANA membership renewal page or this QR code, <https://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/membership.html>



By Mail: Please mail a check payable to MGCAANA (Annual membership: \$15 - Students; \$25 - Regular). Address: Treasurer, MGCAANA, 2417 NE 20th, Renton, WA 98056.

Note: If you wish, you can also renew your membership for 3, 5, or 10 years by paying US\$70.00, US\$115.00 and US \$230.00 respectively. Your support helps MGCAANA continue its legacy in helping Mayans and their communities in North America as well as current students at Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

Upcoming MGCAANA Activities

- Board meetings
- Next Newsletter (August 2026)
- 22nd AGM

Want to know what your Board of Directors (BOD) is up to?

Please read the minutes of the BOD's monthly meetings posted on MGCAANA website:

<http://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/minutes.php>

If you have new ideas, concerns, suggestions etc. to improve MGCAANA and to find out how it operates, please feel free to connect with the BOD through email:

Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Newsletter Committee :

Ms. Veroni Nadeesha Jayawardana and Ms. Ayanthi Fernando

Dear valued members,

Please send your articles, pictures and artistic creations for the MGCAANA Newsletter to its official email account of MGCAANA, which is mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Send in any personal success stories, recipes or even old memories that you would like to share with our fellow Mayans. Kids and family members are most welcome to share their artistry with us. The Newsletter committee will retain your original work of art and will publish your work as space is available.

Thank you,

The Newsletter Committee.
MGCAANA 2025/2026