

Maya Puwath - මායා පුවත්

**Bi-Monthly Newsletter of Mahamaya Girls' College
Alumnae Association of North America (MGCAANA)
Volume 15 – Issue 4 – August 2019**



Message from the Editors

Dear readers,

With about a month left, we hope you are enjoying your summer. For members with kids especially in Canada, we bet some of you are getting ready for back-to-school activities. It has been a good one for us in the Maya Puwath Newsletter Committee, as each of us got to visit Sri Lanka this summer.

In this August issue, you will get to read about an extraordinary effort by our MGCAANA members in Connecticut to raise money for MGCAANA. You will read about how a few inspirational individuals organized a very successful fundraising event in their community and how you can replicate their efforts in your own communities for a good cause like supporting MGCAANA. We are truly inspired!

Speaking of inspirational people, we interviewed Amali Alawatta, MGCAANA Vice President who was instrumental in the fundraising event in Connecticut. We enjoyed getting to know her and hope you will to.

Also include in this issue of Maya Puwath is a thought-provoking poem written by Nalini Jeyapalan, and a re-publication from 2014 of a beautiful story surrounding Ruwanwelisaya written by Medha Bulumulla, a daughter of a member. And of course, we did not forget to include a delicious recipe (hint: it's a tasty chocolatey dessert) sent in by Sureni Ranasinghe.

Last but not least, you will also find information about the 2019-2020 MGCAANA Undergraduate and Graduate Scholarship. This year, MGCAANA will award \$500 to one (1) MGCAANA member. We hope you enjoy this newsletter, and we hope to meet you again in October.

Take care

Maya Puwath Newsletter Committee

In this issue

- Introduction to MGCAANA Vice President and MGCAANA's First 2019-2020 Fundraising Event
- The Interview
- Pause-Rewind-Play
- Recipe Corner
- MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship
- Invitation to Join Newsletter Committee
- Poetry Corner



***Yathapi puppharasimha
kayira malagune bahu
evam jatena maccena
kattabbam kusalam bahum***



“As from a collection of flowers many a garland can be made by an expert florist, so also, much good can be done (with wealth, out of faith and generosity) by one subject to birth and death.”

[Dhammapada \(Verse 53\)](#)

**An Introduction to our New MGCAANA Vice President
and
the First MGCAANA Fundraising Event for 2019-2020**

By Hashini Mohottala

Introducing Amali

Through the last issue of Maya Puwath, our readership got to know a lot about our newly-appointed President Senali Dissanayake and her vision and mission toward the success of MGCAANA. Through this issue, I thought of submitting this note to introduce our Vice President, Amali Alawatta to MGCAANA members. Amali and her positive attitude inspire me all the time, and I consider it my duty to introduce her to fellow Mayans in or organization. She is a young member who is new to the organization, new to the Board of Directors and undoubtedly a great asset to MGCAANA. Amali is an amazing person who is loved by all Sri Lankans and non-Sri Lankans equally in Connecticut.



I don't recall a fundraising event held in CT toward a worthy cause without her and her husband Kalpa's presence. As a Sri Lankan, a Mayan and a Buddhist, she is closely connected with the community in Connecticut. As we know, in every community there are small satellite groups with different interests, and I would like to consider Amali as a strong link that keep all such sub Sri Lankan groups connected in the area. She is well known and well respected by all.

On top her job as a Special Education teacher, she contributes her time to teach at our Dhamma School. She dedicates her time and energy selflessly toward teaching Dhamma to our young kids in CT. When MGCAANA reached out to her with an invitation to run for the election of the MGCAANA Board of Directors (BOD) for 2019-2020, she accepted the opportunity very graciously. Once elected as a Director, in her own words she said, "It's been a while since I gave something back to our school and thank you for the opportunity." I don't think I have to go further on elaborating her for what a capable and dedicated person she is.

"Food for Donations" Fundraising Idea

Our first fund raising idea for the year 2019- 2020, "Food for Donations" is completely Amali's idea, which was strongly backed and supported by the President and fellow Mayans in the area. Given the large number of fund-raising events that happen in almost a weekly basis in CT to support a Buddhist temple in the area, our proposal came out as bit of a challenge and somewhat impossible. But Amali's drive, determination, and teamwork overcame various challenges, and not only made the fundraising idea a possibility but also a tremendously successful fundraising event. End of the day, our hard work was paid off by a collection of funds exceeding \$1500!

(Contd.)

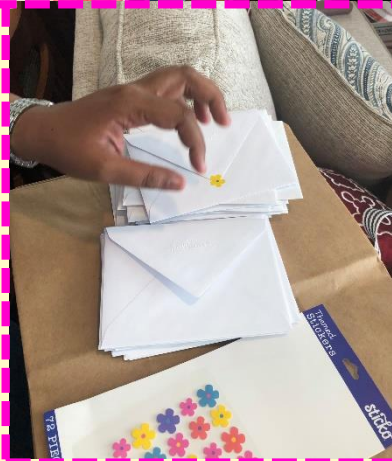
We would love it if all Mayans across North America do what we did, or do something similar and engage in fundraising for MGCAANA. It is such a rewarding activity, as you get to spend time with fellow Mayans and get to know past students from different age groups while engaging in a good cause. It's amazing to talk about common things that we all know about our school and share stories that are unique to each age group. The friendship made this immensely ambitious task an effortless one, laughter rang through the floors.

How We Organized Ourselves to Raise \$1500

I take this opportunity to tell the readership how it all happened step by step. As mentioned earlier, this was all Amali's idea. She took the lead. The seedling of this fundraising idea was planted even before the Annual General Meeting was held in CT this year. A few Mayans in CT, Amali, Senali, Savithri Werasuriya and myself in particular exchanged countless text messages and phone calls. After the second BOD meeting this year, we decided to execute our plan. Each of us was assigned tasks. One major task was to find out people who would be interested in buying food and donate to our organization. Then we contacted a close friend, Beauty, who is an expert in making an Indonesian cuisine – Nasi-goreng. Amali and other members volunteered in every way they could to prepare the food. Amali and Kalpa opened their home to us, and Beauty contributed her precious time, energy and culinary expertise to raise money for MGCAANA. Our initial goal was to get at least 50 orders. But the news spread across the area, and within a few days our orders went over 100. Sadly, we had to say no to some requests along the way. We all gathered at Amali's house, some with spouses and children and others with friends. It was a beautiful Sunday morning. When the clock stroke 8:00 AM, we started our work. Being such a meticulous person, Amali had several workstations set-up for all, and the parallel processing began. By 11:00 AM, we had 120+ rice packets prepared and ready to go. Amali had a little personalized Thank-You card attached to each order. It was so professional.

We left the place soon after, delivering the food parcels across the state to all who agreed to donate. By 5:00 PM, we had collected donations that exceeded \$1500 marking this event a notable fundraising event in MGCAANA's history. There is always a first to everything. It was a giant step put forward by a very small Mayan group, coming from a very small state like Connecticut. If you all can do something similar where you live, you sure can make a significant contribution to the organization. A very big thank-you goes to all CT- Sri Lankan residents who participated in this worthy cause. Without them and their support we wouldn't be able to see this much of a success in our first fund-raising event in the area. Thank you all CT Mayans and SL residents out there!

We are waiting to see the events like this to follow from you out there! We are excited for what we did, and we are very hopeful that you will do a similar fundraising event too!!



The Interview

In this segment, the Maya Puwath team sits down with a MGCAANA member to hear about what they are up to these days, their experience with MGCAANA, and any advice and tips they would like to share with our readers. E-mail mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com if you would like to be interviewed by the Maya Puwath team or if you know of a MGCAANA member you would like featured in "The Interview".

Amali Alawatta

Q: Amali, congratulations on recently being elected the Vice President of MGCAANA! Since you are fairly new to MGCAANA, tell us a bit about who you are, for fellow MGCAANA members to get to know a bit about you.

A: Thank you! I am Amali Alawatta, I live in Connecticut with my husband. To start with my school years, I went to Mahamaya from 1990 to 1999. At school, I went by my maiden name, Hettiarachchi. While at Mahamaya, I was a member of the cadet platoon in 1999 and 2000.

Since childhood, I was passionate about becoming a teacher. Therefore, after A/Ls I entered Mahaweli National College of Education as a teacher trainee, completed my teaching diploma in 2004, and did my internship as a teacher of English at Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy. I was humbled to serve the young children of Mahamaya as it was kind of a give-back to my alma mater. After Mahamaya, I was appointed as a teacher at Kandy Kingswood College. While at Kingswood, I completed my Bachelor's Degree of Arts from the University of Peradeniya (external).

I had to end my teaching career and move to the USA after getting married in 2008. I then started working as a preschool teacher in a Head Start program. To further my education in the field of Early Childhood Education, I completed my Bachelor of Science in Child Studies in 2017. Currently, I work as a special education pre-k paraprofessional in Middletown Public Schools. As an act of giving back to the community, I currently teach at the Dhamma School in Connecticut Buddhist Vihara. I am very excited to be a part of the MGCAANA foundation and looking forward to meet and work with all the wonderful Mayans!

Q: We heard that you were part of a recent fundraising event that raised over \$1500 for MGCAANA. Can you talk a bit about your experience with this fundraising project? Any words of encouragement for other members who may be interested in fundraising for MGCAANA?

A: I am glad that I get to share about this experience on the newsletter for the Mayans to read. Hashini Mohottala, one of our directors, did write a beautiful article on the fundraiser that was recently held in CT. However, adding a few words on that, the initial idea to raise funds by making food came after we did a successful fundraiser for the Connecticut Meditation center. A friend of mine made nasi goreng (Indonesian fried rice) and people loved it. Being an old girl of Kandy Girls' High School, she volunteered to help us to prepare nasi goreng, in order to raise funds for MGCAANA. It only took one week for us to initiate, plan, organize, get orders, and to execute the idea! We started the project at 7 a.m. on the 4th of August and were done by 11.00 a.m.!



The Interview (contd.)

Amali Alawatta (contd.)

I must say that this event was a great success only because of the wonderful teamwork shown by fellow Mayans; Senali Dissanayaka (President), Hashini Mohottala (BoD), and Savithri Werasuriya (a Mayan) and our dearest husbands and friends. This is a good example of how a very simple idea can be turned into a major success and I invite all Mayans to start simple. We do not need big events to raise funds. Start with the basics. It's not the amount that matters, but it's all about collaboration, planning, team effort, and most of all; having fun while you're at work! Every dollar counts if we collect for a good cause. All you have to do is put your mind into it and keep going.

Q: Please tell us a bit about your experience while at Mahamaya. How was it like, and what kind of activities were you involved in while studying there?

A: It is true to say that attending Mahamaya was one of the best experiences I have had in my life as it paved me the path to become the person who I am today. I was an average child who used to do all sorts of things at school. I did my studies and at the same time I did not forget to enjoy my school life. I could say that I have tried out and have participated in activities such as track and field, inter-house singing and drama competitions, different societies, and cadetting, while at school. Whenever I reminisce of my past, all I could say about my school life is; 'Those were the best days of my life!'

Q: What do you do for fun? What are your hobbies?

A: I believe in "you only live once" and try to enjoy every moment that life puts in front of me. I am blessed with a great circle of friends here in CT, and we often gather a few times a week. We travel together, shop, cook, try out new food, hike, go to movies, etc. My husband and I also like travelling, and whenever he gets time off, we visit new places. I had this Summer off for the first time in ten years, and I made sure that I take the best out of it! Reading is definitely in my hobbies list as well.

Q: We have readers who are not yet members of MGCAANA. What's your message to them, to encourage them to become members of our great organization?

A: Living far away from home bound by the duties and responsibilities that life puts on us, we sometimes tend to drift away from our fond memories. Joining MGCAANA made me realize that it is time to give back to those who committed for me once in my life. Being a grade five scholarship awardee, even though my parents were able to attend to my needs, I personally realize how difficult it is for some children and parents who come from far away rural areas to adapt and survive in the concrete cities. MGCAANA serves them the best way possible and I am sure that those children are forever grateful! You have to be in it to understand how satisfying it is to give back. Therefore, I invite my Mayan sisters to come join MGCAANA, pass the message along to your other friends, do not procrastinate, get involved! NOW is the time!

Q: Is there anything else you would like to share with us, as the Vice President of MGCAANA?

A: I am immensely thankful to the MGCAANA founders for letting Mayans join hands together and to get involved to serve the school community and the community in general.

Thank you so much Amali for your valuable time! It's been a pleasure interviewing you and we look forward to your leadership in MGCAANA!

A: It's my pleasure and looking forward to the journey! Thank you!



Maya Puwath has been reaching the MGCAANA membership since 2005, and "Pause – Rewind – Play" re-publishes past contributions to Maya Puwath, by MGCAANA members.

Ruwanwelisaya Temple **By** **Medha Dorabawila Bulumulla**



The bullock cart, which is a cart pulled by two bulls, stopped. My grandfather and his family got out of the bullock cart. He was tired from the long trip. They had arrived at the Ruwanwelisaya temple. The pagoda at the temple was white with a gold tip on the top. It was magnificent.

My grandfather was hungry and wanted to have his dinner immediately. However, the plan was to eat dinner only after they went to the temple. Before going to the temple, they had other things to do so as well. He wanted to go to the temple the next day or to go to the temple as soon as possible, so he could eat.

There were little shops everywhere. Some had fresh fruits in them. He sprinted towards one. He sniffed the amazing fruits. There were mangos, bananas, pineapples, duryian, rambutan, and watermelon. Duryian is a fruit with big spikes on the outside. It has a super strong smell. The smell isn't too bad. It will give some people a headache after a while, though. Inside it is white and gooey. Rambutan is a small red fruit. It has something like spikes on it but the spikes aren't hard. The spikes are quite flimsy and are sort of like sharp strings. Inside of a rambutan is white. In Sri Lanka, they have small bananas, which are called plantains. Long big bananas are not common in Sri

Lanka. Plantains taste the same as bananas, though. Looking at all the fruits made him even hungrier.

Then, he overheard two people talking. He heard that they had just completed restoring the temple. Today was the day they were reopening it. He also heard they were having a special celebration for the grand re-opening of the temple. He was so excited. My grandfather couldn't catch the conversation on details of the celebration. Now, he really wanted to know what the celebration was going to be. My great grandmother was buying lotus flowers to take to the temple as an offering.

"Would you like a flower?" his mother asked my grandfather.

"Yes, I'd love one," my grandfather replied. She handed him a flower and some to his big family. He walked towards the temple with his family. My grandfather removed his shoes. People are not supposed to wear shoes in the temple. It is considered impolite. Devotees also wear white clothing. He looked at the temple and it looked amazing. "They did a great job on the restoration", he thought.

Lotus flowers are offered at the temple. He walked with his family towards a table used to offer flowers. My grandfather removed the stem of the lotus flower and put the stem in a bucket. He took off the stem, because he wanted to offer the beautiful and delicate part of the flower. My grandfather offered the flower on the table and put his two hands together. His big family went back and sat down to pray.

Then he smelled something extremely strong. It was much stronger than any smell he had experienced before. The smell was of lotus flowers, but felt more potent. He looked at the table, but there weren't too many flowers there. No one had a huge amount of flowers in their hands either. He thought about where it came from, but he could not come up with an answer. Then, the smell got stronger. Finally, he figured out where the smell was coming from. It was coming from the sky.



(Contd.)

Then, something big and loud appeared in the air. It was right above the gold tip of the temple and was astonishing. He thought about it hard. It was pretty big and noisy. Something above it was spinning fast and creating a strong wind.

“What is that thing!” he yelled at my great grandmother.

“That’s a helicopter. It flies in the air and takes people to their destination.” My great grandmother said to my grandfather.

“Wow! I want one!” my grandfather said. My great grandmother smiled.

Soon something was falling from the helicopter. When they came down, my grandfather noticed what they were. They were lotus flowers. Soon more helicopters came. More flowers came down. It was very colorful. There were white, purple and pink flowers. Some kids were running everywhere trying to catch flowers. Some of the older kids sat and watched the flowers drop down. Many of the kids were laughing and smiling. Most of them had a bouquet of flowers in their hands from the flowers they caught. One landed on my grandfather’s head. He stood up. He took it off and held it in his hands. He smiled brightly and looked at the purple flower. He held out his right hand to catch flowers. He kept his purple flower in his left hand. A lot of flowers landed on his hand. He put all the flowers in both of his hands.

The helicopters stopped dropping flowers and flew somewhere else. When it ended there were many flowers all over the temple. One flower even landed on the gold tip. It was amazing. It was almost like a rainbow of flowers. He looked everywhere. Everyone was smiling. My grandfather stuffed his nose into some of the lotus flowers. He inhaled the beautiful smell of the flowers.

My grandfather left the temple. He was so glad that they were at the temple that day and not the next morning.

“Can we eat something now?” my grandfather asked.

They walked toward the fruit stand. My grandfather chose a mango. The man at the stand sliced the mango. The whole family shared the mango. It was juicy and delicious. They left the temple area. My grandfather never forgot that beautiful and fun day.

Writer’s note: This is based on an anecdote from my maternal grandfather on an experience, he had around 1940, when he was 3 years old, but the details are fictional. He passed away on 11/10/2014. I wrote this when I was 11 years old. That summer, with my grandfather, I visited the Ruwanwelisaya temple and offered lotus flowers. This is a picture I took of the temple on that visit.

This piece was originally published in 2014 in the “Kids Corner” section. Medha is now a Freshman at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Recipe Corner

Chocolate Biscuit Pudding

By

Sureni Ranasinghe



Note: This is slightly different from the "traditional" chocolate biscuit pudding we make in Sri Lanka. No confectioner's sugar (i.e. icing sugar) is used in this recipe.

Ingredients:

- 24 Marie biscuits (any biscuit you prefer)
- 1 teaspoon of instant coffee (you can even use regular coffee)
- 1 cup of hot water

For the pudding

- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 2 tablespoons of cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder
- 2 cups of whole milk
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of chocolate chips

How to:

- ☐ In a small bowl mix coffee with hot water, set aside for 10 minutes
- ☐ After 10 minutes dip biscuits in coffee one by one and layer it in the dish that you are going to make the pudding (layer it slightly overlapping each biscuit)
- ☐ Leave it aside and start the pudding
- ☐ In a medium side saucepan add sugar, corn starch, cocoa powder, salt and combine all together

- ☐ Keep the saucepan on medium heat and start adding milk a little at a time while stirring
- ☐ Keep stirring until the mixture comes to a thicker consistency
- ☐ Bring the mixture to a boil
- ☐ Add chocolate chips at this time and mix well until its dissolved
- ☐ When it bubbles take off from heat
- ☐ Add vanilla and give it a mix
- ☐ Add a layer of pudding on top of the prepared biscuit layer
- ☐ Repeat another biscuit layer on top of that pudding layer and continue doing this for 2 to 3 layers.
- ☐ Give the dish a slight shake when all the layers are done and you can decorate the top with chocolate chips, shaved chocolate or even with some nuts.
- ☐ Chill for a few hours in the fridge and enjoy!

Link to the Chocolate biscuit pudding video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8NPoWOBvkU&t=1s>

MGCAANA UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (2019-2020)

The Selection Committee of the MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program is looking for Mahamaya alumnae who demonstrate outstanding academic achievements, leadership and active participation in extra curricular activities and also a significant level of financial need. Intended to cover the cost of textbooks for a semester, a scholarships of \$500.00 will be awarded to one (1) candidate this year.

Application Period & Deadline: September 1, 2019-December 31, 2019

Award Notification: By January 31, 2020

Once the application period begins, please visit <http://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/scholarship.html> to view and download the scholarship application. If you have any questions about this scholarship program, please contact us at mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com.

We look forward to receiving your applications!

Interested in joining the Maya Puwath Newsletter Committee?

The Maya Puwath Newsletter Committee has been one of the most active MGCAANA committees since the beginning of our Association. Many active MGCAANA members have worked hard over the years to connect MGCAANA members and well-wishers to the latest news about MGCAANA activities as well as Mahamaya.

Working as part of this Committee, you will gain and hone many skills, including writing, graphic design, communication, research, just to name a few. You will also get an opportunity to work more closely with a few fellow Mayans in the Committee.

If interested, please contact the current Maya Puwath Newsletter Committee at:
Mayamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com.

Some Upcoming MGCAANA Activities

- Board Meetings (September, October, November)
- Next Newsletter (October)
- MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program Deadline (December 31, 2019)

A Room Without a View

By Nalini Jeyapalan

How, when the room is lavished
With décor so pleasing,
Senses by its beauty ravished,
Not be happy within?
How, when pile velvet rugs
Soothe bare feet,
On gleaming oak floors glide,
Not be happy inside?
Why, when soft satin sofas
Caress an aging body,
Cushions cradle a wrinkled face,
Silken drapes conceal a dismal
place, Be sad?
Sun degrades the skin with
melanin.
An un-shaded window awakens
With sights of the sun-forsakens
Stomping outside.
Starts unbidden a question
frayed,
Why in color-contrasted places
strayed?
Crash! The shade descends
No light;
Entombed in eternal night.



MGCAANA News

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

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

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

If you have new ideas, concerns, or suggestions to improve how MGCAANA operates etc. please feel free to connect with the BOD through e-mail:

Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Contributing to Maya Puwath

Contributing to Maya Puwath is a great and easy way you could be an active member of MGCAANA. We accept content produced by you, articles written by others with proper acknowledgement, as well as news from Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

No time to write an article but would still like to contribute to Maya Puwath? Not a problem! We welcome content produced by children of MGCAANA member that we will feature in the Kids' Corner of Maya Puwath.

Please send your contributions to the upcoming October issue of Maya Puwath:

Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Newsletter Committee: Vihara
Dharmaratne, Vajeera Dorabawila,
Lilika Molligoda

***Maya Puwath is a publication of
Mahamaya Girls' College Alumnae
Association in North America
(MGCAANA)***