

Relief for the Indigenous Vedda Community near Mahiyangana



Dear Buddhist Relief Mission:

Thank you for your contribution to assist the Vedda community in Dambana. We spent two productive days, October 16 and 17, in the village, enjoying their delicious food. A team of health workers, headed by Dr Medagedara came for one day, examining 400 patients from 10 AM to 3 PM and dispensing free medicine. It was certainly a tough task in the hot weather that prevailed.

We gave a backpack, school supplies, yoghurt, and a packet of milk to each of 185 students, and nutritional supplement to pregnant women. Thank you once again for your generosity. We wish all of your donors good health and happiness.

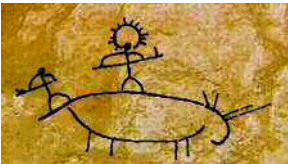
With metta,

Mohan Samarakoon, Sri Lanka Cancer Society, Kandy Branch



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Donations may also be made



The Veddas, “Forest Dwellers,” are Sri Lanka’s indigenous people. Once a proud and independent people, they are now struggling to preserve their culture. Only a few of the older generation still maintain their traditions.

In Vedda communities, cooperation and togetherness is important.

Game and food are shared, no matter how difficult the hunt was. There are gender roles, but men and women are treated as equals.

1947 was a turning point for the Vedda. The government opened a primary school in Dambana. Forced to follow the government curriculum, the children no longer spent much time learning the traditional culture and wisdom. With deforestation, families turned to fishing and chena, “slash and burn,” cultivation. Traditionally, gathering honey was their main source of income, but that is no longer viable. One method of preserving meat was to stuff it in the hollow of a tree, which was then filled with honey and sealed.

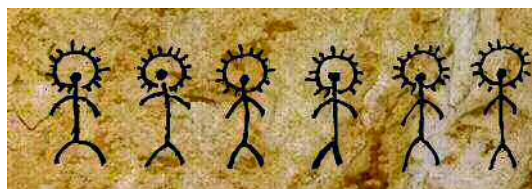
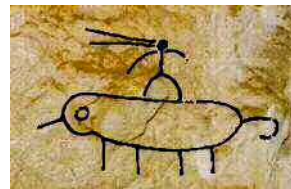
Traditionally, childbirth took place at home, and the older women assisted the new mother. There were many rituals, as well as strict diets and natural medications for the mother and child. Now, birth occurs in a hospital, which is, of course, safer, but the wisdom gained over generations is being lost.

The Vedda worship “Yakkha,” deities, which are their ancestors.

The chief deity is a female named Kuveni. When a member of the community dies, it is believed that he or she joins the Yakkha relatives. Before the Vedda established villages, they lived in caves, and, when a member of the household passed away, the body was covered with dried leaves and left in the cave dwelling. All the other occupants moved to a new place, and the old cave was not reused for many years.

As the Vedda are assimilated into Sri Lankan society, many are moving to the cities to seek employment. Television, radio, computers, and mobile phones are also greatly weakening the traditional culture. Furthermore, tourists often visit the villages and treat the occupants as objects of attraction.

For many years, the Vedda have been trying to resist these pernicious influences, and, recently, they requested that any new constitution include the protection of their rights to live in the jungle, to hunt game, and to conduct traditional agriculture, while safeguarding the ecosystem. They would also like to see an end to illegal housing in forest areas and to be recognized as a separate minority community.



This text is based on “Veddas: The First People Of Sri Lanka.” by Thiva Arunagirinathan
<<https://roar.media/english/life/culture-identities/veddas-the-first-people-of-sri-lanka>>



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For donation by international bank transfer, please send a request to buddhist@brelief.org for instructions.

This is just one of the many projects Buddhist Relief Mission conducts. Your donations will also provide food, medicine, and other essentials to individuals, families, students, monastics, and institutions in Sri Lanka during this economic crisis. Thank you for your generous support!
Sadhu! Sadhu!! Sadhu!!!

Helping Children, Cancer Patients, Young Men in Rehab, and More



Tikiri Sevana, an Orphanage

In the hills between Kandy and Peradeniya is a lovely government-run orphanage with about 20 children under five years old. We have visited the orphanage several times and made donations to the children. In October, we were happy to make arrangements again to deliver food, including rice, bananas, beans, pulses, coconuts, milk powder, tea, yoghurt, spices, and nutritional supplement, as well as diapers, soap, and laundry detergent. We also bought more than 20 stuffed animals, which we will donate this month, along with 12 bottles of vitamin syrup.

On the fifteenth of every month, Buddhist Relief Mission offers high tea to the patients at this facility, operated by Sri Lanka Cancer Society, Kandy Branch. The home serves as a hostel for out-of-town patients to stay during their extended treatment, often lasting three months or more. For our offering, Lily prepares soup and vegetable cutlets. Usually, several friends join us in making egg-salad sandwiches around our dining table.

Kandy Cancer Home



We also serve bananas, yoghurt, juice, and tea. Last month there were 85 residents, but the number has been as high as 100. Along with the High Tea, we also donate a supply of dry rations, cleaning supplies, and whatever medicine the matron requests. The atmosphere in the home is always extremely caring, congenial, and positive, and the facility is entirely dependent on private donations.



Haji Rafi, a three-wheeler driver, occasionally informs us of families he knows who are in need of food, and we are happy to arrange the requisite number of parcels for him to deliver.

The Buddha said: "If beings knew, as I know, the results of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them with others, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy it, without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it." –Itivuttaka 26

Methasevana Drug Rehabilitation Center

Buddhist Relief Mission and Godwin Memorial Fund provided assistance for the Children's Day Program at this center for young men. Every full-moon day, the residents meditate and take precepts. Last month, so many temples were holding Kathina ceremonies that the counselor could not find a monk to facilitate the puja. He called us and asked whether we could help. With only one day to spare and with the help of one of our Burmese students, we were able to find a Sinhalese monk who was available and willing to help. It was a very auspicious day!



Your donations will enable Buddhist Relief Mission to continue providing food, medicine, and other essentials to individuals, families, students, monastics, and institutions in Sri Lanka during this economic crisis. Thank you for your generous support!
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Buddhist Relief Mission – November 2024



Homeless in Kandy

Responding to the continuing economic crisis, every Friday, Miracle House Church prepares about two hundred box lunches and distributes them to poor and hungry people on the streets of downtown Kandy. Buddhist Relief Mission is happy to cooperate with this project.



Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

There are about one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. They rely entirely on humanitarian assistance for protection, food, water, shelter, and health. They live in temporary shelters in a highly congested camp setting in Cox's Bazar, and on the island of Bhasan Char. With Bangladesh ranking third in the world among the countries most hit by natural disasters, these refugees are extremely vulnerable to weather-related hazards, such as cyclones, flooding, and landslides. BRM recently sent donations to provide food for orphans and solar panels for one of the schools.



Rehabilitation Center

A few days ago, we received a call from Methasevana Drug Rehabilitation Center in Kandy. The counselor explained that the regular food supplier for the center had been seriously affected by the recent torrential rain and floods and was unable to deliver any supplies. The counselor asked whether Buddhist Relief Mission could provide vegetarian box lunches the following day for the thirty-two young men in residence.



We are grateful to our donors that we are able to respond immediately to emergency requests such as this.



Rohingya refugees protesting the closure of the UNHCR Office in Colombo, Photo credit: AP

Refugees in Sri Lanka

Two years ago the Sri Lanka Navy rescued more than one hundred Rohingya refugees and brought them to Colombo, where they are still languishing, with little

hope for resettlement. In January of this year, they staged a protest against the closure of the UNHCR Office in Colombo, but in vain. Since Sri Lanka has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, these refugees, along with hundreds of others from various countries have been left with no legal status and face imminent statelessness. They have great difficulty finding housing and receiving basic health care. Furthermore, the children are not eligible to attend public schools. Assistance is being coordinated by the National Fisheries Association. BRM is happy to offer some help and is researching the possibility of a physicians' association providing medical care.



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"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.
If you want to be happy, practice compassion."
– H. H. The Dalai Lama



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