

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.

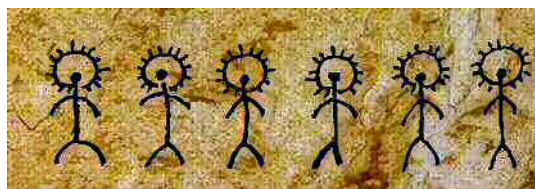
Traditionally, childbirth took place at home, and the older women assisted the new mother. There were many rituals, as well as strict diets and natural medications for the mother and child. Now, birth occurs in a hospital, which is, of course, safer, but the wisdom gained over generations is being lost.

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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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.



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 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.



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



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

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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Prof. David Loy and His Wife Visit Kandy



David Loy, a retired professor of Buddhist and comparative philosophy, a prolific writer, and a Zen teacher, and his wife, Linda, also a retired teacher, arrived in Kandy on January 6, after attending the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) conference in Chennai, and stayed in Anniwatte for six days. On January 7, we held a dana for nine monks, some of whom came from Colombo to meet the professor, and three nuns. Several friends and neighbors joined us for the auspicious occasion.

Before lunch, David spent about an hour with the monks and nuns discussing some of the ideas in his latest book, *Ecodharma: Buddhist Teachings for the Ecological Crisis*. In an evening session, attended by a group of activists from Kandy, he presented his concept of the "Ecosattva," focusing on the urgency for each of us to recognize our intimate relationship, our oneness, with the environment and to make a commitment to work for its protection and preservation. (Four photos below)

The next morning, David presented a lecture at The Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Peradeniya, on "Is the ecological crisis also a spiritual crisis?," one of the chapters of *Ecodharma*. (Two photos at the bottom of the page)

To learn more about Professor Loy's work and his many books on engaged Buddhism and ecology, please visit his website, <<https://www.davidloy.org/>>

During their stay in India, David and Linda had collected a lot of toiletries from various hotels. They asked whether we might be able to find a use for them. A few days later, completely by coincidence, we learned that the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Kandy was offering free dental exams. They were delighted to receive the toothbrushes and toothpaste to distribute to the patients. How serendipitous! After all, another name for Sri Lanka is *Serendib*!



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Every donation to Buddhist Relief Mission provides relief to refugees, hungry families in Sri Lanka, needy students, cancer patients, the handicapped, or members of the Sangha. Thank you for your generous support. Sadhu! Sadhu!! Sadhu!!!



On Sunday, January 12, Professor Loy joined our ESL class with three students in person and several more via ZOOM. He led a lively discussion of some of the ideas from his book. This was particularly interesting for our students because, in recent weeks, we have been reading some of David's writing on engaged Buddhism, war, nonviolence, and the ecological crisis.



"People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes. All is a miracle." —Thich Nhat Hanh, *Miracle of Mindfulness*

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David and some of our neighbors helped us make sandwiches for High Tea at the Kandy Cancer Home. On the 15th of every month, we offer soup, vegetable cutlets, egg-salad sandwiches, yoghurt, and bananas to all the patients. On these occasions, we share merit those who have passed away, sick friends and relatives, and those celebrating special days. Please join us by donating and indicating with whom to share merit.



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Hunger is the Greatest Disease



Our dear friend, Jagath, is the owner and chief driver of Jagath Tours, the most reliable tour agency we know in Sri Lanka. His grandfather, his father, and he were stewards for Ven. Sumedha, the Swiss monk and artist who lived for many years in Manapadassana Cave in Halloluwa, Kandy. When Jagath takes tourists around the island, particularly to the Cultural Triangle, Buddhist Relief Mission frequently gives him money so that he can buy food and medicine locally for members of the Sangha and needy families that we could not otherwise reach. On a recent tour, he was able to provide, in addition to dry rations, several boxes of much needed blood glucose test strips to diabetic nuns in Anuradhapura. We are very grateful for Jagath's assistance with our relief project, and his customers are delighted that they can be part of the donation.

GENEROSITY BRINGS HAPPINESS AT EVERY STAGE OF ITS EXPRESSION. WE EXPERIENCE JOY IN FORMING THE INTENTION TO BE GENEROUS. WE EXPERIENCE JOY IN THE ACTUAL ACT OF GIVING SOMETHING. AND WE EXPERIENCE JOY IN REMEMBERING THE FACT THAT WE HAVE GIVEN.



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 TAIN 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."

-ITIVUTTKA 26

Every Friday, the Miracle House Church in Kandy prepares box lunches of curry and rice and distributes them to poor people on the streets of Kandy, many of whom are homeless. We are pleased that Buddhist Relief Mission has been able contribute to this project several times. Seeing the happy faces of the people as they receive the lunch packets is truly a joy. We express a hearty "Well done!" to the pastor and members of the church who devote their time carrying out this work each week.



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Providing Assistance to the Needy in Sri Lanka

Education at government schools in Sri Lanka is free for all students. However, peripheral expenses for items, such as shoes, a uniform, a bookbag (backpack), notebooks, pens, pencils, drawing instruments, etc, some of which are required, can be costly and out of reach for many families. Buddhist Relief Mission has received requests from two organizations—the Ayappa Society of Kandy and the Sri Lanka Cancer Society, Kandy Branch—for assistance in providing school supplies to needy students. We would like to help both. Here is more information about the two requests.



ம.மா/கொத்/குயின்ஸ் பெரி த.வி கெட்டபுலா
 ம.ம/கொத்/குயின்ஸ் பெரி
 CP/KOT/ QUEENSBERRY T.V KATABOOLA

There are 400 students in this school on the Queensberry Tea Estate—195 in grades 1-5 and 205 in grades 6-11. The wages the tea estate workers receive are barely enough for food for the family. There is little or nothing left over for school supplies. Without assistance, the children cannot attend the school and benefit from the education which would offer them a brighter future. The Ayappa Society of Kandy would like to provide each student with a set of basic stationery items.



SRI LANKA CANCER SOCIETY - KANDY BRANCH
 Sri Lanka Cancer Society (Incorporation) Act No. 10 of 1997
 ச.ல.க.ச. ச.இ.அ.க. ச.ம.ச. / இலங்கை முறுமுறுகள் சங்கம் - கண்டி
 CANCER HOME NO: 11, Hantana Road, Kandy

The Sri Lanka Cancer Society - Kandy Branch offers an annual scholarship for needed school supplies to 195 students from low-income families in which a member, usually a parent, is suffering from cancer or kidney disease. Due to the expense of the required treatment, these pupils, also, cannot afford all the supplies they need.



A third request has come from the Sri Lanka Cancer Society - Kandy Branch. This is to help purchase a medium-sized refrigerator for a center for the handicapped in southern Sri Lanka. This center was begun by a family who offered to help a young disabled student. Before long, they were asked to take in additional patients, and the Meth Sewa Foundation has grown to 115 residents. None of them can bathe themselves, and most have to be fed. With donations from outside, the foundation has been able to erect a new building to accommodate the residents. The Cancer Society has donated many tables and chairs, as well as wheelchairs. For about six years, the Cancer Society has also periodically provided medical services. Recently, the director requested a refrigerator so that he could sometimes offer the residents ice cream. Click or copy and paste the link below to view a short video of the center.

<https://youtu.be/3n8LZepgeFE?si=M0J89eDpA4nJHD2P>



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Your donations will help support these and other projects for needy students in Sri Lanka, as well as provide food during this economic crisis. Thank you for your generous support!
**Sadhu! Sadhu!!
 Sadhu!!!**



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