

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.

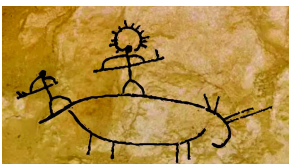
With metta,

Mohan Samarakoon, Sri Lanka Cancer Society, Kandy Branch



<https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=E4PWEKXHBG55G>

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.

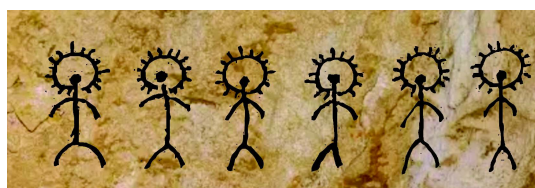
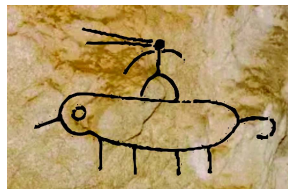
Traditionally, childbirth took place at home, and the older women assisted the new mother. There were many rituals, as well as strict diets and natural medications for the mother and child. Now, birth occurs in a hospital, which is, of course, safer, but the wisdom gained over generations is being lost.

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>>



Buddhist Relief Mission

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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!!!