

By our Monaragala Special Correspondent

1818 Uva-Wellassa Patriots - Never Ever Forgotten

The National Event to commemorate the fallen and the victims at the first national liberation struggle 1816-1818 was commemorated at the Sri Piyaratana Pirivena, Weliyaya, Monaragala, Sri Lanka On Saturday 30 December 2023. The function was sponsored by the Colombo based Suwapath Deshaya Organisation with the assistance of many other patriotic bodies. This was the 205th anniversary of the first national liberation struggle of Ceehale under the British.

With the Kandyan Treaty of 1815, the Vaduga Royalty and relatives were banished to India as agreed with the British. However, the unilateral and contradictory actions immediately thereafter by the Governor and British Commander in Chief Robert Brownrigg caused unrest as the Governors actions indicated that the British were using the treaty settlement to take full colonial control of the island, and thereby, to negate the British Protectorate status the Kingdom of Ceehale achieved by the Treaty. The early liberation from of the Treaty was planned by the Kandyan Chiefs within an year of signing.

Around the globe, the British had shed native blood mindlessly via incursions and attacks using their naval and weaponry superiority on helpless native people in nearly 150 nations. The Kandyan Treaty made with Ceehale is recognised today as the very first occurrence of the application of the treacherous Right to Protect (R2P) principle which the western world had more recently attempted to impose on Ceehale in 2009 aimed at rescuing the cornered LTTE leaders.

Prior to the signing of the Kandyan Treaty, our island nation was in deep turmoil and subject to intrigue between three parties – the hated Vaduga Royal families, the disunited Ceehale Chiefs and the cunning British still licking their wounds from the 1802 debacle and their massacre of their entire invasion force at Gannoruwa.

This story became the well-researched presentation at the Commemoration Ceremony by the our Keynote speaker Senior Lecturer Sumedha Weerawardena of Peradeniya University. Sumedha expounds in detail the great tragedy of Ceehale with references to native primary sources, the torture and great loss lives caused, and the heroic resistance efforts of our freedom fighters..

This commemoration event was dedicated to those who sacrificed their lives, the Chiefs and inhabitants of Kanda Uda Rata and of the low country laded proprietors, Sinhala men women and children, the Veddah generations, the patriotic Muslims, Malay and Javanese, their kith and kin, who were all subjected to an inhumane ‘scorched earth’ policy.

The British committed every possible human rights violation upon their own declared Protectorate, slaughtering all living beings, human or animal in the Uva Wellassa district. The desperation was such that the British slaughtered native males of 14 years and over, as documented.

The Chief Guest at the Wellassa function was Anuradha Yahampath, President of Suwapath Deshaya, the former Governor of the Eastern Province. She is a leading patriot who had been at the forefront of the anti-terrorism movement from mid 1990s and later working with national patriotic teams all along. The Dhamma Anushashana was conducted by the Venerable Maha Nayaka Thero of the Sri Piyaratana Pirivena, Uva Wellassa Chief Sanga Nayaka Most Venerable Kanda-Uda Panguwe Sudhammabhidhana Mahimi.

In her speech Anuradha Yahampath stated four poignant issues facing the Nation. Firstly, the abjectly tragic condition of today's country comparable to the intrigued times of 1816, which led to the freedom struggle of Monarawila Keppetipola Maha Nilamae. At that time quite similarly, peoples lives were in desperation after

three centuries of western incursions and the proud Nation made a country of beggars seeking relief from even poorer nations.

Secondly, she said starting from the very top leaders our national psyche today needs to change from seeking a helping hand elsewhere, but to strengthen the belief in own strengths, and to cultivate them to be the envy of other nations. She further said we have sacrificed our sovereignty having to import our food basics, and are in an unenviable position unable to produce our own staple foods.

Thirdly, she stated that we need to take an example from the Uva Wellasaa struggle of 1816. They were heroes who fought with their backs to wall, and they did not give up the struggle for two long and desperate years to liberate our land. They were always in readiness to sacrifice their own lives and those of their kith and kin.

Finally, she stressed on the all-important aspect of national unity which had been the bane of this land. Such disunity and treachery was displayed openly at the time of the Uva liberation uprising allowing external forces to intrude into our affairs, and for traitors within us to raise their ugly heads.

The Keynote Speech was then given by Sumedha Weerawardena, Senior Lecturer of the Peradeniya University who had made a well-researched presentation with sources derived principally from temple scriptures, mukhaparampara (generational knowledge), archives of various nations of the tragedy and the pointing to the abject failure of the Kandyan Treaty of 1815 and the resultant Uva Wellasaa uprising within a year in 1816. Mr Weerawardena further elucidated the strong and binding triangular governance structure of the Buddhist Nation, the Buddhist Monks, the King and the People of obligations and responsibilities, a structure lasting over 2,000 years that brought peace and prosperity, and resulted in the development and preservation of an unparalleled Buddhist civilisation.

The speech of Asoka Balasuriya, who was successful in knitting together the entire Uva-Wellasaa function and the live wire of the Suwapath Deshaya, spoke and thanked all who had contributed in many ways to keep the patriotic flame in Uva Wellasaa alive and help in highly successful function.

Dharshani Lahandapura the General Secretary of Suwapath Deshaya confirmed that Suwapath Deshaya will provide an open forum for all patriots to discuss and debate the way forward for national unity and the country's success. She further said the all national minded people are joining together with this common goal in their mind purposes.

At the end of a ceremonial drummers beat, around 100 names of the fallen Wellasaa heroes were then read out.

Nimal Liyanage of Suwapath Deshaya concluded with the meeting with the Vote of Thanks listing out all individuals and groups who gave their utmost to make the commemoration function a great success. He further urged all to work towards a suwapath deshayak (a healed Nation), collectively and as well as individuals in a small way to make their contribution, a small example being to reduce the use of the environmental disastrous plastics, and in making an effort of planting vegetables in home gardens.

Wellasaa TV crews covered the entire function and their media presentations will be shown over their channels. Mr Ranabahu of Monaragala performed the compere's tasks dutifully to the praise of all. Jagath Chinthaka of Monaragala performed a marvellous sound and video controls task.

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For more Information, and for your generous donations in Sri Lanka, and worldwide please contact:

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Anuradha Yahampath Inaugurating the Function



1 Sudath Devapura , World Fellowship of Buddhists, Sri Lanka President

2 Arjuna Perera, Suwapath Deshaya ExCo



- 1 Asoka Balasuriya – Suwapath Deshaya ExCo
- 2 Dharshani Lahandapura – Suwapath Deshaya Secy Gen



Ven Uva Wellassa Chief Sanganyake Ven Kanda Uda Panguwe Suddhammabidhana Thero , Parivenadhipathi of Sri Piyaratana Pirivena giving the five precepts to the congregation



Ven Uva Wellassa Chief Sanganayake Ven Kanda Uda Panguwe Suddhammabidhana Thero , Parivenadhipathi of Sri Piyaratana Pirivena giving the Anushshana



Asoka Balasuriya delivering the Welcome Speech



Dharshani Lahanadapura Speaking



Compere Ranabahu and Anurada Yahampath in preparation for her speech



Anuradha Yahampath Speech



Keynote Speaker Senior Lecturer Sumedha Weerawardena of the Peradeniya University delivering the presentation on the Sinhala Buddhist nations triangularly linked, interdependent governing structure, and on the tragic 1816-1818

to 1818 period 1816-1818

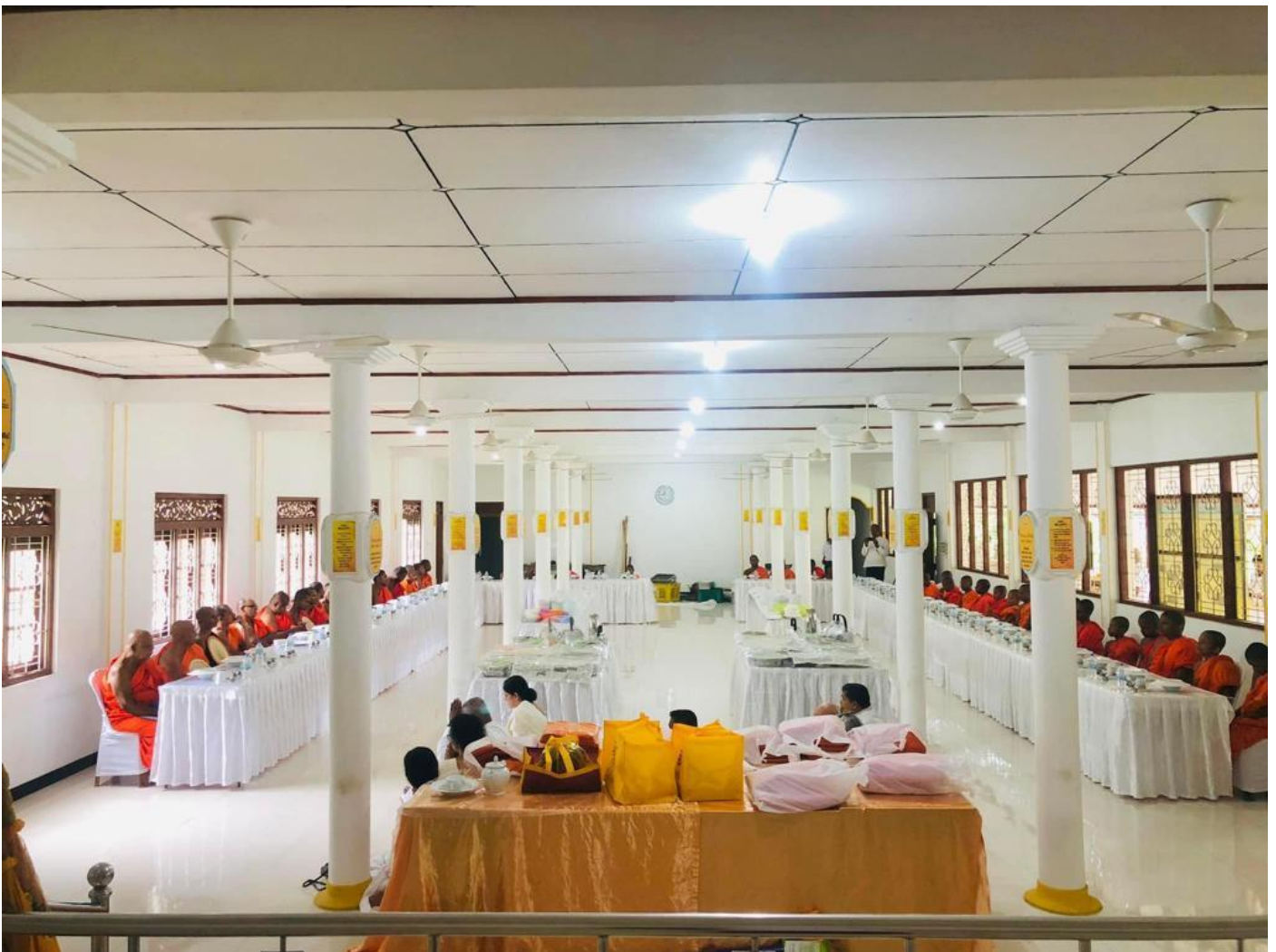




- 1 Drummers beat prior to the reading out of over 100 names of fallen heroes of the 1816 freedom struggle
- 2 Nimal Liyanage , Suwapath Deshaya ExCo delivering the Vote of Thanks



Monks from Monaragala Weliyaya Sri Piyaratana and Kerala Sri Wijewardena Pirivena walking over to the Meeting Hall



Daana Hall of the Weliyaya Temple – Suwapath Deshaya Team Preparing for the alms giving in memory of the fallen





Sudath Devapura of the World Fellowship of Buddhists , Sri Lanka President offering robes to the monks



(L to R) Sumedha Weerawardena, Anuradha Yahampath, Sugath Devapura, Dharshani Lahandapura, Anuradha Gamaarachchi (hidden) and Asoka Balsuriya in final *pen-wedeema* ceremony while the monks chant for the memory and for the merit of the fallen in 1816-1818 Liberation Struggle.

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