

Humble Journey of Podi Hamuduruwo

Bearing the administrative responsibilities of running a temple from a young age, Podi Hamuduruwo devoted his life to uplifting the nation. Podi Hamuduruwo epitomizes the teachings of the Buddha. His life is one dedicated to the betterment of others, where the country always comes first.



The Gangaramaya Temple is an oasis in the heart of Colombo, an escape from the commercial hub into a calm, shaded spiritual haven. It is a temple that engages in charity with much altruism. Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero, fondly known as Podi Hamuduruwo,

has guided and led the Gangaramaya Temple over the years with great courage, dedication, and motivation, reflecting the teachings of the Buddha.

Podi Hamuduruwo was ten years old when he was ordained as Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero when one had to take a boat across the Beira Lake to reach the temple. He was at the tender age of 16 when his guru and the then Chief Incumbent Ven Vacissara Thero was left entirely visually impaired. Podi Hamuduruwo had to take on the responsibility of leading the temple at that young age. It was a task the young monk undertook courageously and competently.

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Podi Hamuduruwo has ensured that a temple is a spiritual place for everyone, and the building of the Seema Malakaya is an early example. Podi Hamuduruwo has always focused on spiritual, cultural, and social welfare. Supporting the youth through skills training, employment, and providing for underprivileged families started during the early days and continues to date.

The Jinarathana Vocational Training Institute was one of the first private institutions to introduce the Diploma in English, which received Government recognition. By following this course, many individuals learned through an example to work with discipline, continence, and unity and work promptly with humility toward success. The first audio-visual language learning platform was introduced to Sri Lanka by the Gangaramaya Temple, as no other university or educational institute used this technique. The Podi Hamuduruwo brought this learning technique in 1976 after a visit to England. The center also caters to the children of personnel of the Armed Forces who have dropped out of school, thus providing them with a guiding light for the future. The Sri Jinaratana Centre has so far enabled many young people to gain employment. Over 50 technical courses including electronics, motor mechanism, tinkering, painting, blacksmith work, welding and electric wiring are offered. Podi Hamuduruwo has always looked for innovative ways to sustain the country's values and people, irrespective of religion or race. Elders and children, the most vulnerable sections in society, are specially taken care of by the Gangaramaya Temple. Podi Hamuduruwo has fostered longstanding relations with temples overseas to ensure cross-cultural learning.

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The Navam Perahera is also the brainchild of the Venerable Thero. It is a beautiful act of revival, of keeping our traditional arts alive through a colorful, magnificent pageant. It also incorporated elements of other faiths in keeping with the spirit of Gangaramaya. It forms an elaborate cultural procession with numerous artistic creations from various parts of the country. The flag-bearers clad in white national dress, torch-bearers, dancers, drummers in traditional garb, and caparisoned elephants form part of the procession.

Social responsibility is the catchword everywhere today, but for Podi Hamuduruwo, it's something he has been practicing for several decades, drawing in the support and goodwill of those who worship at Gangaramaya and dozens of other individuals and organizations. He had made philanthropic activities a way of life and encouraged hundreds of others to follow the same example. Podi Hamuduruwo has always set an example and guided people in the right direction. Special prayers are conducted on the eve of the 31st night at the Gangaramaya Temple to invoke blessings for people of all faith to begin the New Year with a clear mind and good thoughts.

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As Podi Hamuduruwo's birthday falls on the 14th of December, may the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with him.

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