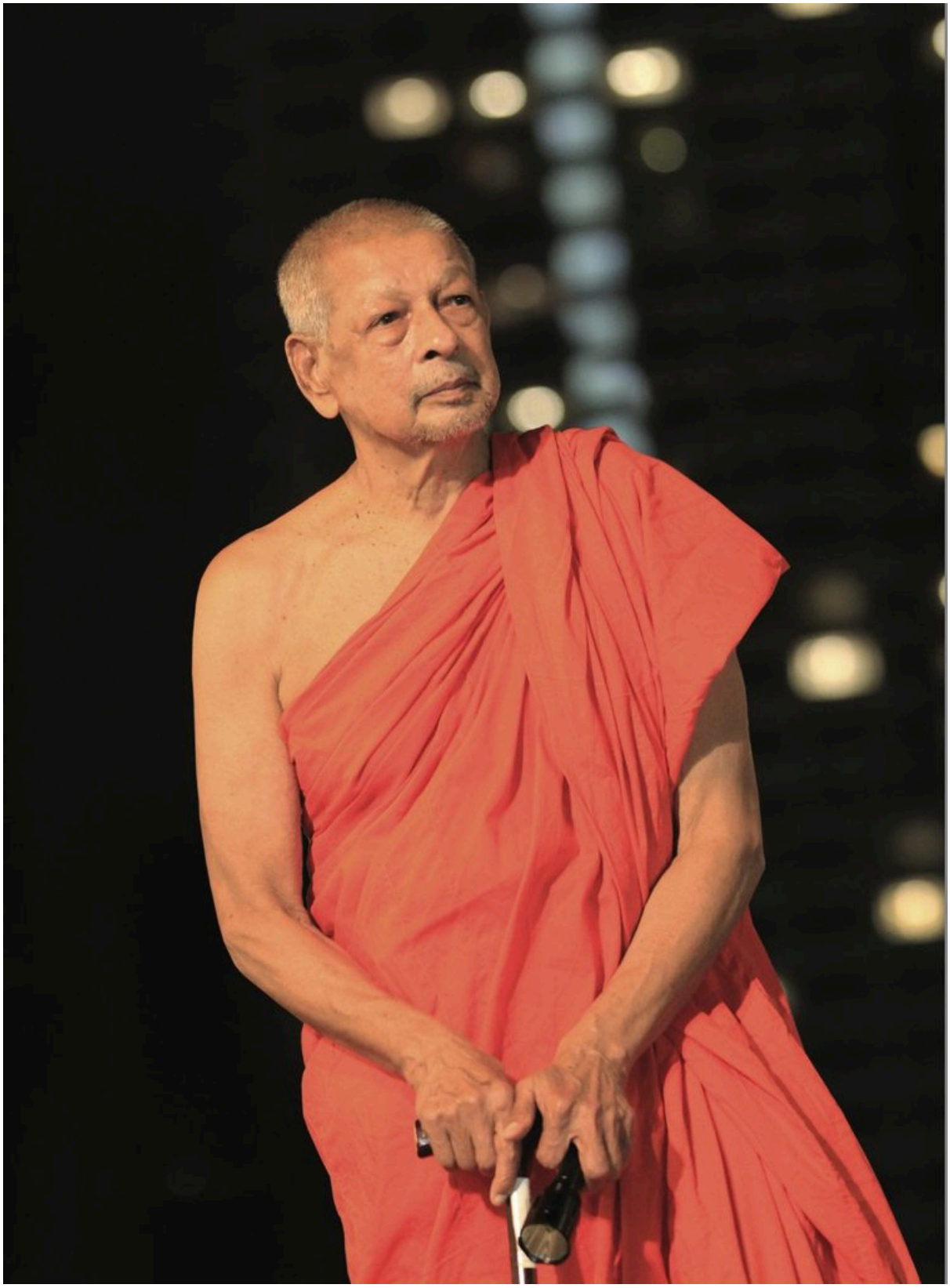


PODI HAMADURUWO AN INSPIRATION

Posted on



For decades Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero, the Chief Incumbent of the Gangaramaya Temple has been the inspiration that has brought all communities together. The Venerable Thero has been a guiding strength always voicing his thoughts for the betterment of the nation. Fondly known as Podi Hamuduruwo, the Venerable Thero was ordained at the tender age of ten, and since then he ventured on a trailblazing path that is of inspiration for others. Podi Hamuduruwo celebrated his birthday on December 14, 2020.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe. | Photographs BT Images.

The Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo has always remained true to its values, all the while committing to endeavors that nourish the spiritual, social and cultural aspects of the country.

Podi Hamuduruwo undertook the responsibilities of the Temple at the age of 16 as the Chief Incumbent at that time Ven Vacissara Thero had become blind due to an illness. The Thero's strong character was visible even at that age. Over the many decades the Thero was able to establish the Gangaramaya Temple as a great center of learning. The legacy of Gangaramaya Temple was continued by Podi Hamuduruwo where many programs were initiated by the Thero. Since 1870, the Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo has strived to provide vocational training to the youth of the country that included printing and publishing. The temple created programs to promote peace and harmony in the country while working towards the betterment of all Sri Lankans regardless of their religion, ethnicity, creed, background and income. As a result, youth and children of all religions and ethnicities came together, and received vocational training and pursued English education.

During youth unrest in the early 1970s, Podi Hamuduruwo established the vocational training center to steer youngsters on to the right path. 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 were able to learn through example to work with discipline, continence and unity, and work in a timely manner with humility towards success. The first audio-visual language learning

platform was introduced to the country by the Gangaramaya Temple, as no other university or educational institute used this technique.

Educating the young has always been a priority for Podi Hamuduruwo.

A 52 perch land in Piliyandala together with a three-story building has been developed to provide education- al programs in selected subjects together with English and computer skills to young children who have left school, so that they will have employment opportunities.

The concept of ‘tree banks’, was also introduced by Podi Hamuduruwo much before it became a buzz word in Sri Lanka. Thus, a tree planting program was initiated by the Temple as well. In addition to creating awareness, Gangaramaya led through practical example. The first ‘tissue culture’ project was also initiated by Podi Hamuduruwo.

Gangaramaya Temple has also sown seeds in order for the rural communities to reap harvests. Unutilized properties in far away Okkampitiya, Weeraketiya, Galaha and Akuressa have been converted into fertile patches of crops. Local communities benefit from working in the fields and selling the crops. Gangaramaya extends further support by providing training on all aspects of farming.

Another major project is Na Sevana, a huge community project that impacts the vast Hambantota district, focusing on economic, educational and spiritual development as well as health and wellbeing.

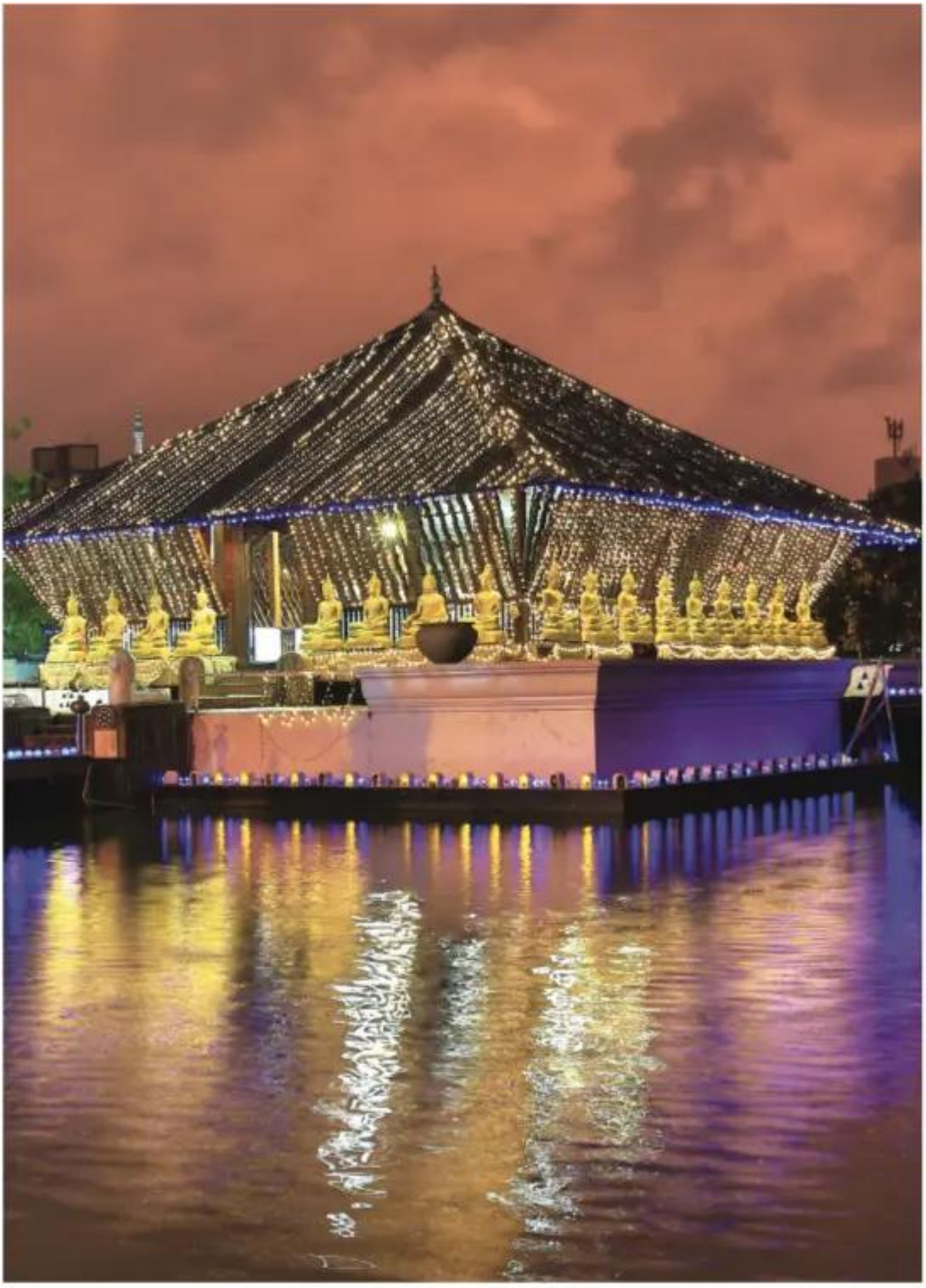
Pindapatha is the ancient tradition of gathering alms from door to door by Buddhist monks. However, over the years this declined, one reason being that the acidity in the food resulted in the corrosion of the Paththaraya (alms bowl). It was much more than reviving a tradition when Podi Hamuduruwo began distributing over 10,000 stainless steel Paththaras each year. It was to ensure that the humility of the Buddhist monk remained. The Navam Perahera is also the brainchild of Podi Hamuduruwo, in which the aim was to preserve Sri Lankan artistry and culture. This also ensured that traditional performers and artistes continued in their profession where the art form would be preserved

for posterity. All faiths were represented in this cultural pageant that lights up the streets of Colombo.

Preserving culture and heritage remains an important role of the temple. The extensive museum and the art gallery within the temple premises are great examples.

Philanthropy and spiritual and social upliftment endeavors go hand in hand with the religious practices that the Temple engages in. The numerous programs and projects that Podi Hamuduruwo initiated and maintained over the years, serve the needy, unemployed, elderly and orphaned as well as filling voids in infrastructure needs for pilgrims and visiting monks. These measures contribute towards the greater welfare of society while instilling a sense of responsibility among communities. Thus, Podi Hamuduruwo is a true inspiration to all.

With Podi Hamuduruwo convalescing from his ailments, we wish the Venerable Thero a speedy recovery. May the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with Podi Hamuduruwo.

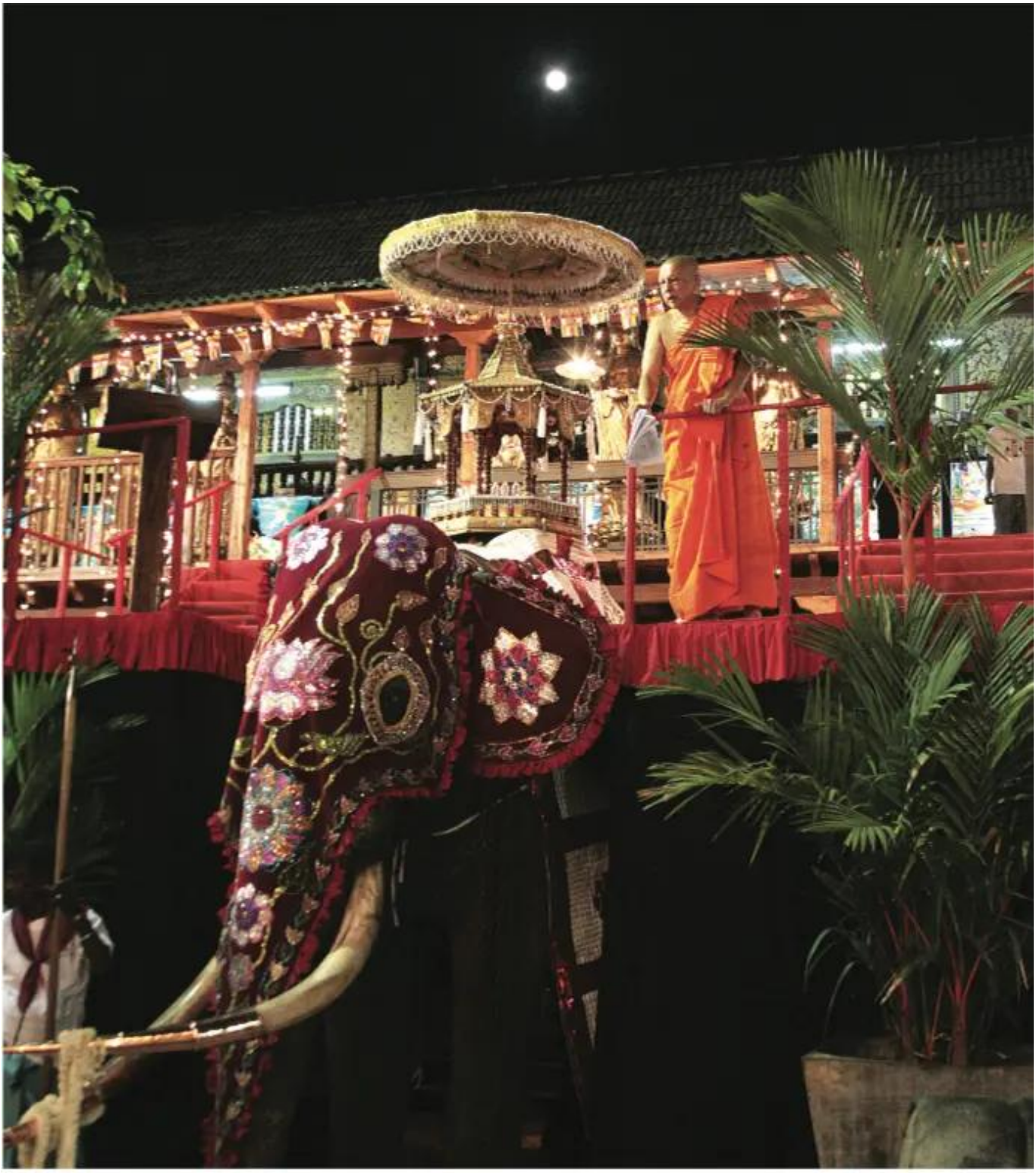


The iconic Seemamalakaya magical upon the Beira Lake.

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Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Gangaramaya Temple, is an inspiration to all.



The Navam Perahera was initiated by Podi Hamuduruwo as 'The' cultural pageant of Colombo.

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