Podi Hamuduruwo: the guiding strength

Posted on



Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Gangaramaya Temple has always been a strength to the country.

Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero, Chief Incumbent of the Gangaramaya Temple has always been a guiding strength to the country. His kindness and compassion transcends all boundaries and it is for this reason that the Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo has become one of the most prominent temples in Sri Lanka.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe.

Photographs BT Images.

Ven Galboda Gnanissara Thero is affectionately known as Podi Hamuduruwo because he took on the immense responsibility of the Chief Incumbent of the Gangaramaya Temple at the tender age of 16. As such, even today the name remains in the hearts of all devotees who know the Hamuduruwo so well. Being very young at the time of becoming the Chief Incumbent of the temple, Podi Hamuduruwo infused a youthful energy and vision, that recognized the need to uplift the younger generations of the country and guide them on the right path. Always keeping true to the traditions, values and strengths inculcated by the founder, Ven Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero, Podi Hamuduruwo has ensured that through the Temple, the welfare of the masses and the protection of the environment would always be high priorities.

Over the years, Podi Hamuduruwo has enabled and strengthened the Gangaramaya Temple, the Dayaka Sabhawa and the Lineage of Sangha to take his vision forward.

As Sri Lanka embarks on an era of political transformation with a new leader at the helm, Podi Hamuduruwo’s wish for the country is to journey forward in harmony without any differences, where all religions and communities join together for the betterment of the nation. The Thero further elaborates that it is the responsibility of all religious leaders and representatives to ensure peace and harmony, together with religious reconciliation, in order to create a harmonious community, and that all need to understand this and act accordingly.

Providing opportunities for the youth of the country has always been a priority for Podi Hamuduruwo. The Sri Jinarathana Technical College was established in 1978 to provide education, vocational training and thereafter employment opportunities for the youth. They were given life skills including English and computer literacy to enable them to face the modern world. Those who have followed the courses, continue to secure employment and start their businesses not only in Sri Lanka but also overseas. In this manner, Podi Hamuduruwo has continuously strived to support the younger generation. Furthermore, in the past few years, the Thero also worked towards enhancing the value of the qualifications provided.

In Piliyandala, the land together with a state-of-the-art technical college was donated to the Gangaramaya Temple by Priyan Attygalle, grandson of Sir Nicholas

Attygalle, in memory of their young son. Here too, English and Computer courses amongst many other subjects are offered to students. Presently there are about five programs on-going and those who have completed the courses have been able to secure employment.

Podi Hamuduruwo always recognized the importance of agriculture for Sri Lanka. Thus, he continuously encouraged and introduced many novel concepts. The Temple is presently developing model farms in various districts that focus on dairy, agro and vocational training. The model farms range from 50-100 acres, with land, seeds and other agricultural inputs provided to the farmers to enable greater productivity and harvest.

Furthermore, selected villages are being transformed into mindfulness villages, which is an initiative implemented together with the support of the Sri Jayewardenepura University. Once a program is completed, diploma certificates will be presented to the participants. Podi Hamuduruwo also continuously encourages the projects initiated by his students in the Sangha as they follow the vision that he has inspired within them. Model farms are established currently in places such as Sooriyawewa, Weeraketiya, Delthota and Monaragala. Through all projects, Podi Hamuduruwo ensures that the people receive spiritual upliftment as well as quality of life.

With the growing interest in Theravada Buddhism in the western world, many visit Sri Lanka seeking spiritual guidance, mindfulness and respite. Thus, a meditation center has been established in Kalalgoda, on a land donated by Prof Maithri Wickramasinghe on behalf of the Bandarathilake family. Thirty persons can stay on the premises and various programs are held throughout the month. As there is limited space on the premises at Kalalgoda, another meditation center is being built in Ingiriya at the Nugadanda estate, which is a 50-acre property donated by the family of Badrawathie Fernando. On a clear day, at the highest point on the land, Sri Pada and the World Trade Centre in Colombo can be seen. More than 100 can participate in the meditation and mindfulness programs, and the Center will be completed and opened in December 2020.

The Gangaramaya Temple under the guidance of Podi Hamuduruwo has always emphasized the importance of molding an individual because it has to be done carefully, where they have to be mentored and guided towards the right path. Thus, molding a Samanera priest to be a member of the Sangha and to be of service to the country is a noble task. Podi Hamuduruwo has been dedicated to creating a

good and strong Bhikkhu order.

A scholarship program was initiated by the Thero for all newly ordained priests to pursue their education. During the time of Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, Podi Hamuduruwo advocated for the Prachina Upadiya to be made equivalent to a BA (Hons) degree, thus giving a value to the education of the Sangha.

> *With Podi Hamuduruwo celebrating his birthday on December 14, 2019 may the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with him.*

Thus, a Buddhist priest is able to pursue postgraduate studies as well. With that qualification, they are able to teach in schools and universities. Even to this date, the scholarship program continues.

Furthermore, the Kalutara Bodhiya Trust also provides scholarships to young priests in the Kalutara and Galle districts. This is all done to create a generation of educated and well-trained, disciplined and compassionate Bhikkhus, so that the country develops spiritually. Many piriven around the country have been supported and developed to ensure that the education provided is of the highest standard.

Podi Hamuduruwo has always set an example and it is a must that all Bhikkhus of the Gangaramaya Temple are well-versed in the Dhamma and Buddhist traditions.

Always focusing on guiding the people in the right direction, the Podi Hamuduruwo introduced the December 31st Pirith Ceremony, so that people of all faiths begin the New Year with a clear mind and good thoughts.

With Podi Hamuduruwo celebrating his birthday on December 14, 2019 may the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with him.

```
[easy_media_download
url="https://beta.explore.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Podi-Hamuduruwo.pdf" text="Print PDF" target="_blank" width="200" height="32"]
```

[ngg_images source=”galleries” container_ids=”1596″ display_type=”photocrati-nextgen_basic_thumbnails” override_thumbnail_settings=”0″ thumbnail_width=”100″ thumbnail_height=”80″ thumbnail_crop=”1″ images_per_page=”20″ number_of_columns=”0″ ajax_pagination=”0″

show_all_in_lightbox=”0″ use_imagebrowser_effect=”0″ show_slideshow_link=”0″ slideshow_link_text=”[Show as slideshow]” order_by=”sortorder” order_direction=”ASC” returns=”included” maximum_entity_count=”500″]