# In Memoriam BHANTE PATEGAMA GNANARAMA



Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quarterly E-Bulletin April to June 2019

# Most Penerable

# Dr Pategama Gnanarama Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera Ph.D, D.Litt (Hons)

6 December 1931 – 4 June 2019

Founding Principal, Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore Honorary Adviser, BPC Alumni Abbot, Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka Chief Religious Adviser, Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association, Singapore

At 3.06 am on 4 June 2019 (Tuesday), the Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore (BPC) lost its steward and the pillar of strength, our beloved founding Principal, Dr Pategama Gnanarama Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera.

BPC was set up in 1993 by the Late Venerable M. M. Mahaweera Nayaka Maha Thera to propagate and popularise higher studies of Buddhism in Singapore. As the founding Principal, Venerable Gnanarama shouldered tirelessly the heavy responsibilities of working closely with the Buddhist & Pāli University of Sri Lanka to structure and review the syllabi of the tertiary education in Buddhist Studies leading to the award of Diploma, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts (MA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees, as well as the administration of examinations in Singapore to certify candidates' academic attainment. Not only was he attentive to the teaching staff's and students' needs and development, but he was also skilful in grooming students to become teachers to accelerate the propagation of Buddhist knowledge. From the initial years when many university lecturers from Sri Lanka and India were invited by him to serve the BPC as teaching staff, the BPC graduates and post-graduates who hold MA and PhD degrees have since voluntarily taken over the teaching responsibility. Under Venerable Gnanarama's astute leadership, BPC has gone from strength to strength, and produced more than a thousand of Diploma holders, graduates and postgraduates who are well versed in Theravada tradition and other Buddhist tradition.

Venerable Gnanarama was born at Bentara Walallavita Korale Pategama, a hamlet in Galle District of Sri Lanka. His parents were Mr R. G. Silva, a businessman and Mdm S. S. E. Karunatilaka, a Sinhalese school mistress. He, second of 6 siblings, received his ordination in 1946 from the Most Venerable Abhidhammika Welitara Pannananda Maha Thera, the Chief Incumbent of Purvarama Buddhist Temple, Gunasinhapura, Colombo 12. His mentor was Venerable Pategama Pannarama Maha Thera.

Venerable Gnanarama received his higher ordination in 1956. He attained Vidyodaya Pirivena in Colombo for his monastic education. After completing his studies at Pirivena, he attended Olcott College (then afternoon session of Ananda College, Colombo) for his secondary education. He sat for his university entrance examination in 1957 and entered the University of Peradeniya (the one and only university then, known as University of Ceylon).

Venerable Gnanarama was an erudite monk in numerous fields of studies, especially in Buddhist studies. He was a knowledgeable lecturer and a research scholar in Buddhist philosophy (both Theravada and Mahayana), social philosophy, philosophy of religion, Pāli and Sanskrit. He was also a guest speaker on Buddhist themes in local and overseas seminars and symposiums.

Venerable Gnanarama was a prolific writer. He had produced research articles to numerous academic journals, commemorative volumes, felicitation volumes, periodicals and centenary volumes in Singapore, Sri Lanka and many countries. He had authorised books on Buddhist philosophy and sociology. His books are well organised and insightful, and are widely circulated and read as prescribed texts and reference books for Buddhist studies in the universities in many countries. Some examples of his books are:

### <u>Sinhala</u>

- A Study of Jataka Tales
- Early Buddhism and Problems of Interpretation
- Three Centuries After the Great Decease
- Plato (co-author)

### <u>English</u>

- An Approach to Buddhist Social Philosophy
- Aspects of Early Buddhist Sociological Thought
- Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta
- Blueprint of Free Inquiry and Personal Verification
- Essentials of Buddhism
- Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy
- Fundamentals of Buddhist Social Philosophy
- Glimpse of Buddhist Wisdom
- Socio Religious Significance of Buddhist Chanting
- The Buddhism on Human Dignity
- The Charter for an Ideal Society
- The Mission Accomplished
- The Therapeutic Value of Loving Kindness
- The Women's Social Role Re-defined

With great compassion and humility, Venerable Gnanarama collaborated with local and foreign temples and Buddhist institutions for mutual harmony and friendship. He participated widely in conferences and seminars on peace, religion and philosophy in more than 32 countries. He had also addressed academics in many international forums in these countries.

Venerable Gnanarama had been in good health, except for some minor ailments due to ageing. Showing the transitory nature of all the entities of this world, he passed away without any recession of his fine memory at 3.06 am on 4 June 2019 (Tuesday).

> May Our Seloved Jounding Principal, Penerable Pategama Inanarama Attain the Supreme Pliss of Nibbāna!

Sources of Information: BPC, Singapore; Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka; and Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association, Singapore.

### Wake at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple), 4-5 June 2019

#### 4 June 2019

6.45 pm	Casket arrived at Mangala Vihara
	(Buddhist Temple) [MV]
8.00 pm	Maranānussati service by MV and BPCA
8.30 pm	Maranānussati service by Thai Sangha
9.00 pm	Maranānussati service by Ti-Sarana

Buddhist Association



Maranānussati service by MV and BPCA



Paying of last respect by Thai Sangha



Maranānussati service by Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association



Attendance of Sangha at the wake



May Bhante G attain the supreme bliss of Nibbāna!

#### 5 June 2019

- 1.00 pm Maranānussati service by Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association
- 2.00 pm Eulogies
- 2.30 pm Casket left MV for Changi International Airport to Sri Lanka

This e-bulletin re-produces two of the eulogies delivered on 5 June 2019.

#### Eulogy by Dr Lim Ah Swan, Chairman of MV Management Committee

Good afternoon, Venerable Sirs, Brothers and Sisters in the Dhamma,

I have known Bhante G since 1993, when as a Chairman of MV Management Committee, I worked with the late Bhante Mahaweera and Bhante G to register BPC with the MOE and BPU of Sri Lanka.

BPC is exempted from the requirements of the Education Act because the then President of the Religious Harmony Council accepted that the BPC is a religious affiliated educational institute.

Having obtained both registrations, Bhante G worked hard in not only recruiting suitable and relevant lecturers from Sri Lanka, India and Singapore, but also taught several subjects in the early years until we built up a pool of qualified local graduates to teach.

Our late Principal was a scholar in every sense of the word – he wrote books when there weren't any available. In 1993, we were in the early days for the Diploma in Buddhism programme where the syllabuses were just evolving. For example, the syllabus for the current Pāli language in Diploma in Buddhism is unrecognisable as compared to that in 1993!

Not only did Bhante worry about the shortage of lecturers but he had to also contend with the University students in Sri Lanka going on strike against the examination papers. The exam dates for the Diploma in Buddhism had to be pushed back several times. But the students were not aware of these problems.

Through all these Bhante was always optimistic, starting the MA programme and PhD sometimes with himself as the only teacher!

The BPC has grown from a humble beginning to become the best affiliated college with BPU of Sri Lanka. I have seen the results of the Diploma exams from several centres – where Singapore had more than 20 students, Australia with less than 5 and another with only 1. All these credits were due to the great effort of our late Principal.

Many students in Diploma had to drop out because of the distance from their homes to MV. In one particular year, we had more than 100 registered students but only 30 or so sat for exams. I found out later many came from Yishun.

Luckily about 5 years ago we managed to get Poh Ming Tze Temple to let us have a room for the Diploma course. Bhante G was ever grateful for another venue for students to attend.

Today we have many qualified teachers to teach all the subjects offered but not enough classes.

In conclusion, BPC would not have gone from strength to strength except for one exceptional teacher – our beloved Venerable Dr P Gnanarama. We owe a great debt of gratitude to him for raising an awareness in us of the depth of Buddhism in this scientific age.

#### Eulogy by Brother Kovida Jebsons Chia, Chairman of BPCA

Dear Respectable Maha Theras, Venerables, VIP, Brothers and Sisters in the Dhamma,

We have lost a very distinguished, well respected teacher and spiritual friend.

Bhante G had worked very hard for BPC for so many years and as a result, his efforts brought BPC to its present prestigious status as one of the most recognised Buddhist tertiary institutions in Singapore. Bhante G was a spiritual guide, a fatherly figure, a great teacher to many of us in BPC and we would like to express our deepest gratitude to him. We will miss him dearly but we will continue his good work. Bhante G had been staying at TBA for many years and they took very good care of him, financing his high medical fees and others. On behalf of BPCA, I would like to thank TBA for all that they have done for Bhante G.

May our beloved Bhante G attain supreme bliss of Nibbāna soon.



Getting ready for the final journey to Sri Lanka



Farewell Bhante G, please take care!



Vaya Dhamma Sankhāra!

### Wake at Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka, 6-7 June 2019; Funeral on 8 June 2019



Getting ready for the wake at Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka



MV's banner displayed at Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka



Mourning the loss of Bhante Gnanarama – "Your death leaves a heartache no one can heal, but your love leaves a memory no one can steal."



Solemn wake



Remembering Bhante Gnanarama





Singapore delegation paying respect on 7 June 2019



Funeral procession on 8 June 2019



The last journey with Bhante Gnanarama



Pallbearers of the casket



Grand entrance at the cremation venue



Sangha's attendance of the cremation ceremony



A grand send-off with hundreds of devotees flanking both sides of the walkway leading to the cremation site



Casket resting in the main tent, for the performance of the last rites before cremation



BPC Vice Principal, Venerable Seelananda giving a speech



Cremation. May Bhante Gnanarama attain Nibbāna!

#### Speech by Venerable Seelananda, Vice Principal of Buddhist & Pāli College, Singapore

I have been asked to talk about the contributions of our late beloved founding principal, Venerable Dr Pategama Gnanarama Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera from Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore, on behalf of all the teachers, staff, students, BPC Alumni and Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple).

This past week has proven to be very overwhelming for me as both of my dearest teachers, whom I am forever indebted to, were in critical conditions at the same time, but in two different countries.

First of all, I would like to apologise for not being able to be in Singapore during this crucial period as our late Principal passed away peacefully at 3.06 am on 4 June at the Singapore General Hospital. I could not be there for him. I flew back to Sri Lanka on 1 June after receiving an urgent call that my teacher had been hospitalised. I have to respect, to help and make decisions on his behalf. How I wish I could be at two places at the same time. I felt so helpless. We are gathered here today with great reluctance and a heavy heart to bid farewell to our late Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera who had devoted all his life for the sake of Buddhism. No words can describe the loss of such a great teacher. I am sure that everyone who knows Bhante Gnanarama shares the same sentiment as I do.

It was indeed a great honour to have the opportunity to work with him for the past 10 years in the Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore. During my time, he was ever ready to lend a helping hand to guide the teachers, teach the students and lead the college forward to what it is today. He always had the welfare of his students close to his heart.

The Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore was set up in 1993 as an educational project launched under the able guidance and patronage of the late Venerable M M Mahaweera Maha Nayaka Thero. The college aims to fulfil the religious and educational needs of Singaporeans and foreigners who are eager to seek knowledge in Buddhism. The principal of this college is none other than our Late Venerable Dr Pategama Gnanarama Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera. There has not been a change of principal since the first day the college was set up. The mission of the college is to provide tertiary education in Buddhist studies leading to the award of Diploma, Bachelor of Arts and Master. The college is affiliated to the Buddhist & Pāli University of Sri Lanka. Its degrees are internationally recognised and the university is a member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Buddhist & Pāli University has branches all over the world, including Malaysia, South Korea, Austria, England, USA and Bangladesh.

Buddhist and Pāli College of Singapore is the most successful affiliated branch of the university because the leadership of our late founding principal was so strong. Whenever students faced difficulties, Late Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera would be an ever-ready encyclopaedia. He would recommend which book to read and if the materials were not available, he would spring into actions to write a book to help his students gain understanding and clarify doubts. We can see his compassion and love for the students from the numerous books and publications he wrote.

Late Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera was a strict teacher, yet a humble man. He would observe his students silently for a period of time, sometimes even years, and carefully chose the best ones to be teachers when they graduated. Late Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera picked each and every teacher himself and he trained them well. Teachers were not chosen strictly based on exam results but he focused more on the individual characters. He had always been in silent observation even when he stopped teaching in

recent years. Every Tuesday night, he would be sitting at the Mangala Vihara hall observing his students as they came for classes. Even if he did not teach you in the class, he saw and knew you in person.

Under the guidance of the Late Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera, BPC has produced more than a thousand students consisting of PhD, MA, BA and Diploma holders in Buddhist studies for the past 26 years. Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera worked tirelessly for BPC in Singapore. As a strong pillar of support and a motivational force for his students, he set high standards for himself and expected his students to follow in his footsteps. His departure was not only a great loss to the Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore, but also to the Buddhist community at large. It is his spirit and compassion that will always remain with us as a great teacher that we can always look up to, and as a spiritual guide that we can rely upon, and that some of us will be the role models for all of us to follow.

Let us keep his spirt alive by continuing with his passion in education and learning, as well as propagating Buddhism. His work in Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore must go on. He will always be cherished and remembered, even though we are very reluctant to see him go, but we do find comfort that his sufferings have ceased.

Good bye to my most respected and dearest teacher. Thank you so much for all that you had done for us. All life is annica. Taking this opportunity, let us reflect on the Buddha's teaching. Buddha said that of all the teachings, imperturbability is supreme. May Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera attain the supreme bliss of Nibbāna!

### 7<sup>th</sup> Day Memorial Service at Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka, 11 June 2019



Memorial service of Bhante Gnanarama attended by the Sangha at Purvarama Vihara, Sri Lanka



Memorial service



Dāna after the memorial service

### **Memorial Services in Singapore**

Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist Temple conducted the service on 8 June 2019 (Saturday) at 7.30 pm at 30C St. Michael's Road, Singapore 326002.

Sister Sylvia Bay, a graduate and former lecturer of BPC and a founder of Jetavana Dhamma Institute, dedicated her talk, Dhamma is Hope, on 9 June 2019 (Sunday) at 10.30 am, to Bhante Gnanarama. The dhamma talk was held at Buddhist Fellowship West Centre at 2 Telok Blangah Street 31, Yeo's Building, Singapore 108942.

Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association conducted the service on 10 June 2019 (Monday) at 7.30 pm at No. 5, Sturdee Road, Singapore 207838.

There will be a memorial service in Singapore to mark the passing of Bhante Gnanarama for 3 months. BPCA will announce the details nearer the date.



# & Our School!

### **Activities Line-Up**

BPC will conduct a course review of its Diploma in Buddhism for the public on 20 and 28 July 2019 at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] and Poh Ming Tze Temple [PMT] respectively, to encourage enrolment. The details, as well as our other activities for the year, are set out below.

Schedule	Activity	How to Apply
24 July to 25 September 2019 (every Wednesday), 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm	19 <sup>th</sup> run of Introduction to Buddhism course at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Register by email at Intro2buddhismbpca@gmail.com or call Sister Lynn Choy at 82889888
15 July to 31 August 2019	Enrolment of Diploma in Buddhism	Download application form at http://mv.org.sg or collect it from MV at 30 Jalan Eunos Singapore 419495
20 July 2019 (Saturday), 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm	Course preview of Diploma in Buddhism at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Open to all. No pre-registration required.
28 July 2019 (Sunday) 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm	Course preview of Diploma in Buddhism at PMT, 438 Dunearn Road, Singapore 289613	Open to all. No pre-registration required.
17-25 August 2019 (Saturday to Sunday) [tentative]	Sri Lanka trip and convocation ceremony at Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka	<ul><li>Exclusively for the graduates of:</li><li>BA in Buddhism 2017 and 2018; and</li><li>MA in Buddhism 2017.</li></ul>
6 Oct 2019 (Sunday)	Classes commence for Diploma in Buddhism at MV campus	Register between 15 July and 31 August 2019 by downloading the application form at
8 Oct 2019 (Tuesday)	Classes commence for Diploma in Buddhism at PMT campus	http://mv.org.sg or collect it from MV at 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495.
19-21 October 2019 (Saturday to Monday)	Examinations for Diploma in Buddhism at MV campus, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Students of the Diploma classes 2018-2019.
27 October 2019 (Sunday)	BPC Graduation Ceremony at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	<ul><li>Exclusively for the graduates of:</li><li>Diploma in Buddhism 2018</li><li>BA in Buddhism 2017 and 2018; and</li><li>MA in Buddhism 2017</li></ul>