

The Buddhist Curate

C. W. Leadbeater's Contribution to Buddhist Education in Sri Lanka

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira



C.W. Leadbeater as Curate, 1882

However, [regarding the conversion of western lay Buddhists] one concrete point of reference is Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky's very public taking of pansil (the refuges and precepts taken by Buddhist laity) in Galle, Ceylon in 1880. This was a very high-profile event, often seen as a turning point in the Buddhist Revival. There can be little doubt that it was widely understood as the first lay conversion, and the absence of rebuttals to this claim indicates that Buddhist modernizers, and western sympathizers, were not aware of earlier lay conversions in the Theravada world.

(‘Early Western Lay Buddhists in Colonial Asia: John Bowles Daly and the Buddhist Theosophical Society of Ceylon’, Laurence Cox and Mihirini Sirisena, *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* 3, 2016)

One of the first things Colonel Olcott did while organising the Ceylon educational system was to compose a Buddhist catechism, so that Buddhists could teach their children. This Buddhist Catechism, which was endorsed by the chief priest Sumangala, was one of the most striking contributions to the resuscitation of Buddhism. The Catechism was first published in Sinhalese on 24th July 1881, and later in English and several other languages. As this Catechism was too advanced for some of the children, a simpler, more elementary one was prepared by Rev. C.W. Leadbeater, a British collaborator of the colonel. Colonel Olcott's Catechism has now gone through 44 English editions, and probably more in Sinhalese; and that of Rev. C.W. Leadbeater in Sinhalese (up to 1914) through 21 editions of Part I, and 18 editions of Part II.

(‘Colonel Henry Steele Olcott – The Great American Buddhist’ by Dr. Buddhadasa and P. Kirthisinghe in *Colonel Olcott – His Service to Buddhism*, B. P. Kirthisinghe and M. P. Amarasuriya, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, The Wheel Publication No. 281, 1981)

C. W. LEADBEATER (1854-1934) was ordained a priest in the Church of England on 21 December 1879 and took residence in the village of Liphook with his mother. He had been appointed, on 22 December 1878, as Assistant Stipendiary Curate of the Parish Church of Bramshott, in Southampton, Hampshire, United Kingdom. At Church he organised several activities for young people. He joined the Theosophical Society in November 1883 after reading A. P. Sinnett's *The Occult World*. He met Madame Blavatsky in London in October 1884 and decided to offer himself as a *chela* (disciple) to one of the Masters. He wrote a letter to him in March 1884 but did not receive a reply until October of the same year. Following the Master's suggestion, he resigned from his position in the Church and sailed to India, where he took up residence at Adyar.

In an article in *The Theosophist* (August 1928, "When H.P.B. and Colonel Olcott Took Pañchasīlā"), Mary K. Neff, author of *Personal Memoirs of H. P. Blavatsky*, writes:

It was, indeed, Mr. Leadbeater who followed in the footsteps of Col. Olcott in work for Buddhist Ceylon. He travelled to the East in 1884, with H.P.B. and Mrs. Cooper-Oakley, arriving at Colombo on December 17th, where they were met by Colonel Olcott and Dr. Franz Hartmann. On that day on which he first set foot on Buddhist soil, Mr. Leadbeater took Pansil in the presence of this little party and the Colombo members of the Theosophical Society.

In his book *Old Diary Leaves* (Third Series, 1883-87), Henry S. Olcott, President-Founder of the Theosophical Society, mentions his and C. W. Leadbeater's visit to Colombo:

On the 27th [January, 1886] Mr. Leadbeater and I sailed for Colombo to take up a lecturing tour on behalf of the Buddhist National Education Fund that I had promised to make. The sea was smooth, the weather pleasant, the ship's officers old acquaintances of other voyages, and the stretch of 640 miles from port to port was made in due course. On arrival we were met on board ship, at the jetty steps, and at the new quarters of the Colombo Buddhist Theosophical Society, where a hymn of welcome was sung by some of our school children. I found Mr. (now Sir) Edwin Arnold, his wife, and daughter, in town, and at once set to work to organise a fitting public reception to one who had laid the whole Buddhist world under deep obligations by the writing of his *Light of Asia*. But a very few Sinhalese knew this, however, although Sir Edwin was happily ignorant of the fact, and I had to get my intelligent Colombo Buddhist colleagues to go with me to the priests and secure their co-operation. Fortunately the Ceylon Observer made a virulent attack upon him for his sympathy with Buddhism, which made our task a light one. With the High Priest Sumangala we arranged that the reception should be given at his College on the second day thereafter, and fixed just where the priests and visitors should sit on the platform and what the High Priest should say. A copy of the proposed address was given Sir Edwin at his request, and the function duly came off with complete success. My next neighbour on the platform was George Augustus Sala, who chanced to be passing homeward from Australia. When the guests had departed, Mr. Leadbeater and I were asked by the High Priest to address the people, and did so. (TPH Adyar, 1972, pp. 353-54)

The next important public work that I had to take up was the reorganisation, on a stronger basis, of the Buddhist Defence Committee, a body which as may be remembered we formed in 1884, when I was leaving for London, to represent certain grievances of the Ceylon Buddhists to Lord Derby, the Colonial Secretary. The results of the Colombo Riots of that year, when a peaceable Buddhist procession was murderously attacked by Roman Catholics,

showed the necessity for some permanent committee which should be the channel through which the community might transmit their petitions to Government and secure redress for grievances. Until then, the Sinhalese had had no organisation of a national character, and, consequently, no semblance of public opinion that carried any weight. To the Theosophical Society is due the state of affairs now prevalent, viz., a Committee of Defence and a popular newspaper, circulating throughout the Island and even reaching those who live in the most distant countries as merchants, servants, or in other bread-winning capacities. The remodelled Committee, formed on 18th April, 1885, had the High Priest Sumangala as Honorary President and the most influential laics as active members. I was elected an Honorary Member, and have had frequent occasion to assist with counsel and otherwise my co-religionists. The remaining few days of my stay in the Island were taken up with business in Colombo, and on the 26th [April] I sailed for Madras on the “Chindwara”, on board which comfortable ship I found in the Captain and other officers old “shipmates” of former voyages in Indian waters. During the tour I lectured thirty-two, and Leadbeater twenty-nine, times;

tours were made the Western and Provinces; were collected new Sinhalese of the *Buddhist* Mr.

Bodhya, or were published; Colombo Society, and of

the *Sandaresa*, were subscriptions collected towards the

buildings; the Defence Committee was permanently organised; and, last but not least, the Buddhist Flag was devised, improved, and adopted. A fair show of work, one would say. I returned alone, as it was arranged that Mr. Leadbeater should stay as my local representative and take the general supervision of Buddhist (secular) affairs. (pp. 370-71)



61 Maliban Street, Headquarters of the TS in Colombo, 1886

among the villages of North-Western several hundred rupees for the National Fund; a edition of 5,000 copies *Catechism* and 2,000 of Leadbeater’s *Sisya* elementary Catechism, the accounts of the Buddhist Theosophical our vernacular paper,

overhauled and audited; amounting to Rs. 3,000 were cost of Headquarters’

On 23rd October 1886, a gathering of Buddhist leaders – the laity and the clergy – was held to discuss broadly the plight of the Sinhala Buddhists, the suppression of Buddhist by the British, the drawbacks in education and their social position. A press notice carried the news of this meeting and the proposal for the establishment of a ‘Baudha Shastralaya’ – ‘English Buddhist Academy’ to promote English education among Buddhists. The chief speakers were Ven. Sipkaduwe Thero of Vidiodaya Pirivena, Ven. Migettuwatte Gunananda Thero and C. W. Leadbeater. The ‘English Buddhist Academy’ was established on 1st November 1886, with 60 students, at 61 Maliban Street with Leadbeater as the first Principal.

The following reports, which appeared in the international journal of the Theosophical Society – *The Theosophist* – give an indication of the extent of CWL’s work for the Buddhist cause in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka.

Ceylon – *The Theosophist*, August 1886

Having attended the Wesak Festival, several prominent members of the Colombo Theosophical Society drove down on the following day to Talwatte, where Mr. Leadbeater had engaged to deliver an address. The rain, however, still descended in torrents, and much of the surrounding country was found to be under water. The number of persons present at the preaching-hall was consequently very small, and as the inundation appeared to be rapidly spreading, it was decided after consultation with the priests of the village that the address should be postponed until the dry season, when all the leading men of the neighbourhood could be readily assembled. The Theosophical party readied the Headquarters at 8 P. M., but had to start again immediately for Bambalapitiya, where they were due at nine o'clock. A very good *Dharma-sala* has been erected there by the exertions of some brothers of the Theosophical Society, and we are happy to be able too report that, like the Hall at the Headquarters, it is used by priests of all sects without distinction. No priest, however, being present on this occasion, Mr. Leadbeater gave *Pansil* (which appeared to please the assembled Buddhists greatly) and then spoke for about an hour and half. The audience was large and enthusiastic, and cheered the Theosophists heartily as they drove away. The party eventually reached the Headquarters about 2 A. M., drenched to the skin and fatigued.

This was on the 18th instant. On the morning of the 20th Mr. Leadbeater, in company with the noble hearted Priest Modankara, started on a tour through the Veyangoda, Henerotgoda, and Minuangoda districts, which lasted until the 8th of the following month. It is believed that much good has been done in that portion of the country by this tour, though the financial gain to the Buddhist National Fund was not very great. That this would be so we were warned by the good priest before starting; he told us that in the first place, the people were extremely poor—the majority of them owning, perhaps, a few cocoanut trees or part of a paddy field sufficient to supply their daily wants—but hardly knowing the use of money; and, in the second place, the district in question had only just passed under his jurisdiction – in fact, in many of the villages neither, pansalas nor preaching halls were yet built, and there were no regular dayakas, so that the addresses had to be delivered either in private houses or in the open air. Nevertheless, the time spent in the tour was by no means lost; the Society and its work were brought to the notice of the people of that district, and many enthusiastic friends to the cause were made in these villages; a great impetus was given to the revival of Buddhism, and many copies of the Society's two Buddhist Catechisms were disseminated -- 777 of the smaller and 242 of the large one being sold. It is impossible to speak too highly of the untiring zea and energy for the cause of 'Theosophy displayed by the revered Priest Medankara, and the best thanks of the Society are due to him for the wholehearted assistance which he has given.

On the 14th Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, in company with the well-known and energetic old Priest Megittuwatte, started by the 7.30 train for Anuradhapna, to address the pilgrims at the full moon festival there. Matale was reached at noon, where the party was met by Mr. Louis Wijisingha Mudaliyar (the learned translator of the Mahawanso) and other leading men, and arrangements were made for a speech there on the return journey. The remaining seventy-two miles to Anuradhapura had to be done in horse and bullock-coaches, so that the party reached its destination only at 6.30 on the following morning. The morning was spent in interviewing

the priests and leading men of the place, and in the afternoon an address was delivered to a most enthusiastic audience of between five and six thousand people. The next morning a special meeting of the local magnates was held at eight o'clock, and a committee of influential men was formed to carry on the work in that district, and correspond with the Headquarters on the subject. The north Central Province has thus been opened up as a field for Theosophical work, and there is reason to expect very good results from this auspicious commencement. On their way back to Matale the party visited Mihintale, and also made a hurried inspection of the marvellous rock temples at Dambulla. At Matale an address was delivered near the Court-house, and there was a very good attendance in spite of the usual unpropitious weather. Some idea of the feeling manifested at Anuradhapura and Matale may be formed from the fact that at these two places alone 530 copies of the Introductory Catechism and 282 of the larger one were sold.

On his return Mr. C. W. Leadbeater spent a day and a half in Kandy, where he had interviews with the Mulvathe High Priest, the Deva Nilame, and the Basnayaka Nilame, and succeeded in effecting a compromise in regard to a dispute which has been pending for some time between these officials and the Branch Theosophical Society there. He also convened a meeting of the Kandy T.S., and urged its members to commence practical work at once by starting a Buddhist school. A committee was appointed to collect subscriptions for this purpose, and it is hoped that we may soon be able to announce that this school, which has so long been urgently needed, is really established at last.

The adjourned meeting of the Buddhist Defence Committee was held at the Theosophical Society Headquarters, Maliban Street, Pettah, Coloinho, in the 11th July at 4 P. M.

There were present, the High Priest H. Sumangala, Messrs. Batuwantudawe, Pandit, A. P. Dharmagunawardena, (President, Colombo Theosophical Society), D'Ahrew, F. T. S., C. P. Goonewardena (Secretary, Colombo Theosophical Society), Richard deSilva, Sub-Inspector of Schools (Delegate from Kandy), R. deSilva, F. T. S., Don Philip deSilva, Epa Appuhamy, D. J. deSilva, F. T. S. (Delegate from Kaduganawa), H. Don David, F. T. S., G. F. Weerasekera, F. T. S. (Delegate from Nawalapitiya), N. D. Palls, F. T. S., B. H. Cooray, F. T. S.

The following officers were elected for the current, year:

Chairman, D. A. de S. Batuwantudawe, Pandit,

Vice-Chairman, M. Don Carolis, F. T. S., and D. Philip deSilva Epa Appuhamy.

Secretary, W. D'Abrew. *Asst. Secy.*, H. Don David. *Treasurer*, N. S. Fernando. *Legal Adviser*: C. A. de Silva, Proctor.

Colonel H. S. Olcott and Mr. C. W. Leadbeater were unanimously elected Honorary Members of the Committee.

The code of Rules suggested at the meeting of a temporary committee held at Vidyodaya College, Maligakanda, was adopted.

Mr. Edward R. Gooneratne, F. T. S., the Attapattu Mudaliyar, or Chief Native official of the Galle, District of Ceylon, has taken six months' leave and gone to Siam and Japan on a tour of Buddhistic observation. In the latter country he will be the guest of the Emperor and no doubt, owing to his high official and social position among the Sinhalese people, in Siam also he will receive a welcome at the hands of the sovereign.

Mr. T. B. Panobokke, F. T. S., a nobleman and Government official in the Kandy province, has been selected, by Col. D. M. Strong as President of a local Branch of a Buddhist Revival Society now forming in London by our colleague, Mr. St. George Lane-Fox. Mr. Panobokke is one of the few highly educated men in the island, and in that respect exceptionally well qualified for the position. But the other qualities of persistence and unflagging public Spirit are even more necessary and less common in Ceylon.

A Colombo member writes that when Madame Blavatsky's return is decided upon, it is the ardent wish of the local Branch that she may come by that route and stop a week at Colombo, to give them the opportunity to "make such arrangements as will show their devotion and love to her."

The Wesak Festival in Ceylon – *The Theosophist*, September 1886

Accounts from all parts of the Island show that the Wesak festival was celebrated this year with unexampled enthusiasm—in fact it may be said that this is the first time for some centuries that due honour has been done to this great occasion. Unlike their Christian brothers, who celebrate the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of their Leader on so many different days, the Buddhists concentrate all in this Full-Moon-day of Wesak on which they commemorate at once the birth of their LORD, His attainment of the Buddhahood, and His departure from the world, whose misery He did so much to alleviate, no other festival, therefore, can approach this importance, for no other (in this age at least) has so influenced the destinies of mankind. But for the glorious events of that day the vast majority of mankind would be whirling on helplessly and hopelessly in the ceaseless round of human misery, of recurring births and deaths, without any knowledge of the only way of escape, or of the noble future which lies before them at the end of that way. Therefore it is that Buddhists combine in the joyous celebration of Wesak – that it is a time when all differences are forgotten, all quarrels made up – when scattered members of the family meet together once more, and with one heart and one soul join in laying their pure and lovely flower-offerings on the holy shrines of the Great Teacher.

At the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Colombo the celebration of the festival may be said to have commenced on the previous day (Sunday), for on that morning a refection of tea and cakes was provided for the children of the Buddhist Sunday School by the kindness of Bro. N. S. Fernando. (This Sunday School, it may be mentioned, now contains over one hundred children, and its numbers are increasing every week. Having outgrown the rooms previously used for it, it has now been removed to the Theosophical Hall in Maliban Street. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the work which is thus being done for Buddhism, as all the day-schools and colleges of Colombo are in the hands of Christians.) In the afternoon of the same day a party of leading Theosophists drove over to Kollupitiya, where an address was delivered by Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, and a few words were also spoken by Bro. W. D'Abrew.

At nine o'clock the boys of the Buddhist choir began to arrive, and after a final practice and a hearty tea the carolling party started from the Headquarters at 11.30. It consisted of the Headquarter's staff, some prominent members of the Society, and twenty-two boys, with a cornet, a violin, and an harmonium by way of accompaniment to the voices. It reached Maligakanda exactly at midnight, and was received by the High Priest in person, surrounded by his attendant monks. First of all the Pancha Sila was solemnly recited, many of the enormous crowd who were present joining in with great fervour, impressed by the scene, as

well they might be. Before them was the brilliantly illuminated Vihare, through whose arched doorway was visible the alabaster figure of our LORD; at the top of the steps stood the greatest priest of the Southern Church; at his feet were grouped in a semi-circle the white-robed choristers, and in the centre waved the glorious flag of Buddha, full in the flood of light which poured through the open door. Well might the hearts of all true Buddhists thrill when they looked upon such a sight, when they thought of the great events they had met to commemorate, and when they heard ringing out in clear, sweet, childish voices upon the still midnight air the time-honoured formula of their faith, "I take my refuge in the *Lord*, the Law, the Order." As soon as the Pansil was ended, the boys, two by two, passed slowly and silently into the Vihare, bowed reverently before the image of our LORD, and laid their flower-offerings upon the Shrine; then filed out again, re-formed, and sang two Wesak carols—one in English and one in Sinhalese. The words of the English one were as follows:—

A WESAK CAROL

Hail, day of joy and gladness, the brightest of the year,
The Queen of all the seasons, of all our feasts most dear;
Ho! Buddhists, rise from slumber and greet with one accord
The full-moon-day of Wesak, the birthday of our LORD.

Chorus.—*Then* come all ye who love Him,
With us your voices raise,
While in the song of triumph
His memory we praise.

Never so bright a glory shone o'er the world as then—
Never so fair a sunrise awoke the sons of men;
'Tis meet to such occasion high honour should be done—
Today was born our Leader—Siddhartha, Maya's son.

Chorus.—*Then* come, etc.

Full many a noble teacher hath risen to help the world,
And many a conquering monarch his standards hath unurled;
But never such a Victor, and never such a Sage
As our great DHARMA-RAJA stands forth from history's page.

Chorus.—*Then* come, etc.

He was the bravest warrior who ever drew the sword,
Though never round His footsteps the blood of foemen poured;
Not in an earthly struggle His deeds of might were done,
But o'er the powers of evil His victories were won.

Chorus.—*Then* come, etc.

In many lands and nations, from Russia to Ceylon,
From northern snows to tropics, where'er His law hath shone,
To-day in countless thousands, with joyous laugh and song,
To offer flowers before Him His followers shall throng.

Chorus.—*Then* come, etc.

And over to His temples shall press the eager crowd
To make their pure oblations 'Midst wreaths of incense-cloud;

Richer than gold or silver, or jewel from the mine,
They lay the sacred lotus upon His stainless shrine.

Chorus.—Then come, etc.

Obey we then His teachings—His Five Great Precepts heed;
True follower of LORD BUDDHA_ should from all sin be freed,
And in His Eightfold Pathway their footsteps should remain,
For only at its ending NIRVANA they attain.

Chorus.—Then come, etc.

Very well the boys sang their carols, too; the labour of training voices unacquainted with time and tune (at least as Europeans understand those words) had necessarily been considerable, but it was far more than repaid by the result. The High Priest appeared neatly pleased, and as soon as the music was finished he spoke a few earnest and friendly words to the boys. He said that though he must first of all thank the Society that had brought them there, yet he no less thanked the boys themselves for coming; he told them that they had indeed done well thus to celebrate the very first hour of this great festival by laying their offering of music and flowers at the feet of their Prince and Saviour, and he trusted that the blessing of Him whom they had thus honoured would be with them through life, and keep alive in them the purity of heart and devotion to their religion symbolized by their dress and actions on this occasion. After a few words from the leaders of the party, thanking the High Priest for his fatherly reception, the monks present chanted the *Jayamangala Gatha*, the boys again – two by two – bent before the High Priest for his benediction, and the choir moved on to the temple at Demetagoda. Here and at the beautiful Kotahena temple the proceedings varied but little from those at Maligakanda, the most noteworthy event being a very complimentary speech from that brave old champion of the faith, the silver-tongued Megittuwatte. The choir also visited the house of the President of the Colombo Theosophical Society, Mr. Dharma Gunawardhana Mohandiram, he not being sufficiently well to attend at Maligakanda, as had been at first intended. The night's round terminated at the house of Mr. Simon Pereira, who very kindly provided refreshments for the, by this time, somewhat exhausted party. Day having now dawned, the boys dispersed to their homes for a few hours rest before taking part in the temple processions of the afternoon.

The elders of the party, however, after hoisting the Lord Buda's flag at the Headquarters, immediately started for the Kelaniya in the celebrated Theosophical bullock-cart and reached that well-known shrine soon after nine o'clock. The road thither presented a most striking appearance. Any one acquainted with the country will hardly need to be told that it was raining, and, raining with truly tropical vigour (no less than *three inches* of water fell on that Wesak day); but nevertheless every house hung out its flag—every tree was decorated—and every man and woman was decked out in gala costume. The roads were ankle deep in the peculiar red mud of the country, and furthermore were so crowded with vehicles of all sorts that, pedestrians had to pass most of their time in the ditch; yet there the pedestrians were—thousands of them, women as well as men, stumping sturdily along with their offerings on their heads, evidently in the highest of spirits, laughing and chatting gaily, and letting the rain spoil their best clothes with a cheerful equanimity that one could not sufficiently admire. They evidently entered into the spirit of the day, and were far too much in earnest to care about the weather, villainous as it was; they felt that the occasion was so great that no sacrifice must be spared to do it all the honour in their power.

The nearer the Theosophical party drew to Kelaniya, the more congested became the roads, and the slower, consequently, was their progress; and when at last they reached their destination, they found temple, courts, and platform alike so densely crowded that anything like individual progression was simply impossible—they could only follow the movement of the throng. In due time, though at some risk of suffocation, they were in turn swept through the doors into the Vihare, made their offerings flowers, and were washed out again by the over-flowing surge of humanity. Some few who recognized them endeavoured frantically to clear a way for them; but it was quite useless—every one alike had to take his chance.

After watching this ever-changing crowd with great interest for a couple of hours, the Theosophical party left, and got back to the Headquarters just in time to welcome a magnificent procession which was on its way from the Pettah to Maligakanda. Then, just after its start, it made a brave show indeed; but, alas! almost directly afterwards down came the inevitable deluge, and it reached its destination somewhat shorn of its fair proportions. Not that any of its members abandoned it—everybody was far too enthusiastic even to think of such a step; but some of the decorations and adornments inevitably suffered severely. This, however; did not seem to damp the spirits of its managers; for when the Theosophical party reached Maligakanda an hour later, they found it exhibiting its various component parts with great success to an excessively crowded audience. The houses and grounds at Maligakanda, in fact, were in much the same condition as those at Kelaniya,, and it was a work of the greatest difficulty to make one's way from one point to another. The High Priest, having also been up all night, was somewhat fatigued, but much pleased at having just received a telegram from Colonel Olcott reporting that the flag of the Lord Buddha had been hoisted at sunrise at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. In the part of the procession just exhibiting itself before him it was easy to recognize some of the choir-boys of the previous night—no longer robed in virgin white, but disguised as children of various nations in all sorts of quaint dresses—some of them looking remarkably well in them, too. Thus costumed they sang another carol—but this time to a native air, soft, sweet, and plaintive. Another procession had arrived from Slave Island, and this also included some singing boys, but in this case they were all dressed alike in sky-blue satin, conical hats, and pigtails, to represent Chinese children.

After some conversation with the High Priest and other friends, the party left for Kotahena, where they were once again most cordially received by the ever-kindly Priest Magittuwatte. There the scenes of Maligakanda and Kelaniya were repeated; everywhere the same dense crowd—everywhere the same enthusiasm, in spite of the atrocious weather: and letters from friends in other parts of island report the same state of affairs in their various districts. It is evident that the proclamation of the day as a Government holiday has had a most remarkable effect upon the feelings of the people, and it may hereafter be found that this was one of the most important steps in the great revival of the Buddhist religion now in progress.

CHARLES WEBSTER, F. T. S.

Ceylon – *The Theosophist*, January 1887

The work of the Society in Ceylon has made considerable progress during the past year. The island has had the great advantage of a visit from the President-Founder, who stayed three months, and left Mr. C. W. Leadbeater there to act as his representative. The

Anniversary Meeting was an extremely successful one, and a third Convention of Buddhist priests of the various sects was held by Colonel Olcott during his stay.

The publications of the year have been as follows:—

1) A new edition of five thousand copies of Colonel Olcott's Buddhist Catechism in Sinhalese.

2) An Introductory Buddhist Catechism for children, written by Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, and revised and approved by the High Priest Sumangala. (Seven thousand copies of this are now disposed of, and a new edition is already in the press,)

3) A tract by Mr. Banda, F. T. S., warning the Buddhists against a custom which has become but too common in the island—that of neglecting the festivals of their own religion, and observing as occasions of rejoicing the non-Buddhistic seasons of Christmas and Easter instead.

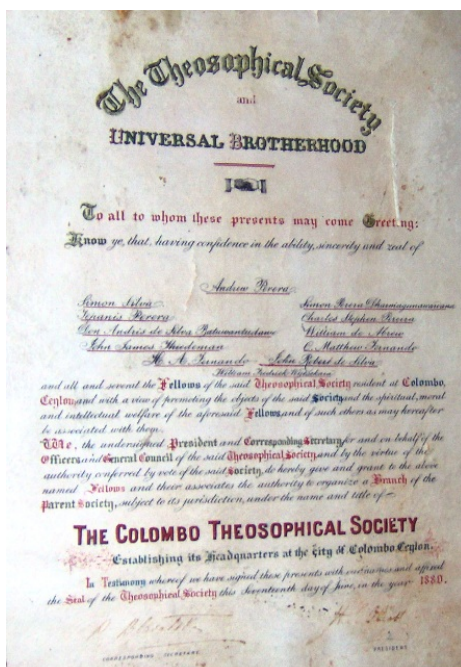
4) A tract on "The Life of Prince Mahinda," also by Mr. Banda.

5) More than a &has have also been gratis to Sunday School The circulation of the *Sarasavisandaresa*, is now acknowledged on all organ of Buddhist opinion become a most powerful area of the Society's work.

The Buddhist Press [a the Colombo Society's weekly journal, general printing done] has the past year that it is operations by purchasing press and several new the original shareholders

helping hand to its their shares to the

The weekly Bana-preaching at the Society's hall in Colombo has been regularly kept up during the past year. Leading priests of all the sects have officiated in turn, and their ministrations have been uniformly well attended; indeed on many occasions the overcrowding of the hall has shown the urgent necessity for the speedy erection of the new Dharmasala and Vihara. A widespread sympathy for this most necessary work seems to be felt in all parts of the island, subscriptions having been received from north, south, east and west, and even, from the country of the aboriginal Veddahs. Assistance and cordial expressions of sympathy have also been received from Sinhalese emigrants in India, Queensland, Singapore, Siam, and Burmah—an event quite unparalleled in the history of Buddhism in the island. Very good results are being realized from the collecting boxes distributed to the Buddhists of Colombo, in aid of the Dharmasala fund, about Rs.10 per day being the average amount received.



Charter of the Colombo Theosophical Society, signed by HPB and HSO

thousand copies of Pali printed, and distributed children and others. Society's weekly paper, the steadily increasing; it is sides as the representative in the island, and has engine for enlarging the

printing office attached to Headquarters, whence the *Sandaresa*, is issued and succeeded so well during intended to enlarge its an additional printing founts of type. Several of have kindly given a

work by presenting Society.

The Buddhist Fancy Bazaar, held annually at the Society's Headquarters, was a decided success last year, a net-profit of over Rs. 800 being realized; and, as far as could be seen up to the day when the delegates left Colombo, there is good reason to hope that the results this year will quite equal those of 1885. It has been determined also to hold semi-annual paddy-shows, with prizes, at the Colombo Headquarters, for the benefit of Buddhist agriculturists.

Eight weekly schools for instruction in the Buddhist religion are now in full operation in Colombo, having on their books 872 boys and 105 girls—altogether 1,077 children. (Since the compiling of these statistics a ninth school has been opened in one of the most crowded parts of Colombo, and it promises in a few weeks' time to equal any of those already existing.) The importance of this labour for the instruction of the rising generation cannot be overrated; it is not yet fully recognized by the majority of Buddhists, but it is hoped that as its fruits begin to show themselves it will be more clearly understood. The secular education of the country has been almost entirely in the hands of the Christians, and until recently no effort seems to have been made by the Buddhists to see that their faith was transmitted pure and undefiled to their children. The resources of the Society do not yet permit it to meet this evil by opening many Buddhist day-schools, but in the meantime the good that is done by the establishment of Buddhist Sunday-schools is absolutely incalculable. The hearts of the few earnest workers in this noble cause were recently much cheered by the arrival of a present of £20 for school expenses and a box of seventy well-selected books for Sunday-school-prizes—both sent by a prominent member of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society. The books were especially welcome, as it is impossible in Ceylon to obtain literature interesting to boys and at the same time uncoloured by Christianity. It is hoped that other friends in Europe and America may follow this noble example, and thus at a comparatively slight cost to themselves give most valuable assistance to the revival of Buddhism now in progress. All contributions, whether of books or money, will be received and acknowledged by the Secretary of the Theosophical Society, Colombo.

The Sunday School at Kandy is progressing satisfactorily and new schools have been opened by the Society's exertions at Waranapala and Katawalamulla. Arrangements have also been made to open a school at Gampola in the course of the next few weeks.

A English Day School for Buddhist children was opened on November 1st at the Headquarters of the Colombo Theosophical Society, and has already proved a complete success. Fifty-seven boys entered their names on the opening day, and the average attendance since has been over sixty. A duly qualified member of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society has consented to act as Head Master of the school as soon as he is at liberty to come out, and in the meantime Mr. C. W. Leadbeater himself is taking charge of it. Such a school has long been a crying need in Colombo, and from the enthusiasm with which its establishment has been greeted by the Buddhists, its promoters see reason to believe that, it will shortly be an undertaking of very great magnitude indeed.

While the President-Founder was in the island he made a very successful tour among the villages of the Western and North-Western Provinces, and after his departure Mr. Leadbeater made tours at various times through the Alutkuru and Siyana Korales, and also paid a visit to Anuradhapura in June, to address the pilgrims at the full-moon festival. The North-Central Province was thus opened as a field for Theosophical work, and very good results are even already following from this auspicious commencement.

The Galle Theosophical Society has during this past year published a pamphlet called "The Mirror of Faith," being a comparison between the tenets of Buddhism and Christianity,

and a thousand copies of it have been distributed gratis among the subscribers to the Buddhist National Fund. Out of the interest of the said Fund a sum of Rs. 200 was voted for educational purposes, and was distributed among six Buddhist schools. A Buddhist Sunday school has also just been opened and is expected that some others will shortly be established.

The Society has received the following letter from the Marquis Tseng:

(Copy.)

Singapore, 5th November 1886.

SIR,—Kindly thank the members of the Theosophical Society on my behalf for their very appropriate present of the books on Buddhism, which I consider most admirably written.

I would have answered earlier, but, much to my regret, the steamer having to start so speedily, I was forced to let the bearer you so kindly sent on board with the books and letter go without a reply, and defer the answer to be sent at Singapore.

Hoping your Society will continue to flourish as it has been doing, I remain yours faithfully,

(Signed) TSENG.

To The Secretary of the Colombo Buddhist Theosophical Society.

The cause of Buddhism has sustained a heavy loss in the deaths of Messrs. H. A. Fernando, H. W. Fernando, and Samuel Pereira, the last mentioned gentleman will be remembered in India as one of the band who accompanied the President-Founder on the historical visit to Tinnevely.

Our report would not be complete without some mention of the Buddhist flag, which was finally perfected by our President-Founder on his last visit, and the colours of whose stripes are canonical and said to have been the several hues of the aura, or *jyoti*, around the Lord Buddha. It has been eagerly adopted as a symbol of the faith by all the sects in Ceylon, and it is confidently hoped that it may similarly be adopted by the various other Buddhist nations, and so become a first link in the strong chain of brotherhood that shall soon bind together all the followers of LORD BUDDHA into a compact phalanx—a mighty army worthy to stand side by side with their Indian brothers in the approaching Armageddon—the great battle between ignorance and knowledge, between evil and good, between the blank outer darkness of dogmatism or materialism and the glorious light of the One Eternal Truth.

C. W. LEADBEATER.

Report of the Ceylon Branches – *The Theosophist*, January 1888

The work in this Island during the past year has been highly encouraging. Many difficulties have been encountered, and attacks have been made upon the work of the Society by various ill-disposed persons, but its officers are happy to be able to report that it has come triumphantly through the order President-Founder.

The Island was visited in January last by the President-Founder. He attended the anniversary commemoration of the cremation of the High Priest Ambagahawatte Indasabha Waranana, and to mark that occasion delivered an address to a very large assembly of priests and people. He then entered upon new ground in the province of Uva, and founded at Badulla a branch which has even already done very good work, and promises well for the future. A house was immediately rented as a temporary Headquarters and an efficient Buddhist school

for boys has since been established there, and is doing well. All the members have become vegetarians, thereby setting an example which might be followed with advantage by our Branches in all parts of the world.

The President-Founder next visited Kandy, and re-organized the Branch there. Fresh officers were appointed, and the Society since been working steadily and well. It has opened a thoroughly well-managed Buddhist English High School, which has a large average attendance; and the Sunday School has also increased considerably. A separate report having been forwarded by this Branch, it is unnecessary to further particularize its work

The anniversary of the Colombo Branch, at which the President-Founder presided, was largely attended and highly successful. Colonel Olcott, before his departure, delivered several lectures in the town, one of which was addressed specially to the English-speaking community, and was highly appreciated. He then visited Galle, and presided at the Anniversary Meeting of the Branch.

A party of Theosophists from India, consisting of Baba Judah Chandra Mitra, Mr. Edward T. Sturdy of New Zealand, and Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, visited the island at the end of March. They delivered addresses to large audiences at Colombo, Kandy, Kalutara, and Gampola. Mr. Sturdy and Jadub Babu were compelled to return to Adyar at the expiration of a fortnight, but Mr. Leadbeater remained to resume his usual work in the island.

In response to an invitation from the Buddhists of Ratnapura, Messrs. Leadbeater and Don David visited that town, delivered several addresses to crowded audiences, and organized a branch of the Society there under the name of "The Sabaragabawa Theosophical Society." Seventeen new members were initiated, and the Society has since been working enthusiastically, having opened two Sunday schools and built a Headquarters. Copies of the Introductory Buddhist Catechism have been distributed to the boys of the neighbourhood, and a Buddhist day school shortly be opened.

The Wesak Festival—a Government holiday, which is owing to Col. Olcott's exertions—was universally celebrated this Year with unprecedented splendour. Every town and village was profusely decorated and hundreds of processions and carol parties attested the joy of the inhabitants. The streets and roads presented the appearance of being prepared for some royal progress, every Buddhist house showing flags and lamps and flowers.

There being a famine in the district of Hanwella in the month of June, the Colombo Theosophical Society made a collection for the relief of the sufferers, and several of the leading members went down to superintend personally the distribution of food amongst them.

Addresses inculcating the necessity of Buddhist education, and advising the establishment of Sunday and day schools, were delivered at Nawala and Kotte, and at the latter place fifty copies of the Introductory Buddhist Catechism were distributed. Buddhist schools for boys have been opened at Kalutara and Karagampitiya, and a school for girls and infant boys has been commenced at Bambalapitiya—all under the management of the Colombo Theosophical Society. The Ambalangoda school for boys has also been placed by its Trustees under the care of this Society. The school of the Society at Gampola, and its Buddhist English High School at Colombo, are progressing satisfactorily, the attendance having very largely increased.

Mr Leadbeater during the year laid two foundation-stones of Buddhist structures—the one being a bell-tower at the well-known metropolitan temple of Kotahena, and the other a Vihara at Kotugoda, which is being built by the exertions of the Priest Panadure Nana Wimalatissa—a praiseworthy effort to introduce the religion of our Blessed LORD into a district hitherto entirely neglected.

The Buddhist newspaper published by the Colombo Theosophical Society has, since the Wesak day, been issued twice a week instead of weekly, as before, and its circulation has largely increased.

The Buddhist Press has succeeded very well during the past year; an additional press has been bought, and the staff of workmen has been considerably increased. It has issued a new edition of two thousand copies of the Introductory Catechism, and also a large of Buddhist tracts.

The Fancy Bazaar, held annually at the Colombo Society's Headquarters, realized a net profit of over Rs. 1,000 last year; and that of 1887, which is now being held, promises to be quite equal to it. Goods were sent for sale from Cambodia and Burma, and money assistance was received from the Sinhalese emigrants in Queensland. A donation and a friendly letter have also been received from Prince Dewawangsa Varoprakar, the Siamese Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Admiral of the Chinese fleet accepted from the Society a copy of Colonel Olcott's Buddhist Catechism and undertook to have it translated into the Chinese language; and during the year it has also been translated into Arabic by an Egyptian Pasha. The Galle Society has also recently purchased a house with land for use as a Headquarters. The pot-collections in Colombo for the erection of the new Dharmasalawa continue to yield good results; and the Headquarters staff of the Colombo Society has recently been strengthened by the arrival of several new and zealous members. Regular and frequent meetings are held; and the weekly preaching at the Headquarters is steadily kept up and well attended. Altogether the prospect for the future is good, and we may close our port with the expression of a confident hope that the work of the Society will soon bring about a thorough revival of the Buddhist religion over the whole of the Island of Ceylon.

C. W. LEADBEATER

The President in Ceylon – *The Theosophist*, February 1889

The clays spent by the President in Colombo were full of official work. Her held the Anniversary of the local Branch and election of officers; organized the new Ceylon section, distributed the prizes to the Buddhist English High School, and delivered an address to the invited guests; gave a lecture in our Head-quarters Hall; transacted very important financial business connected with the Branch Society's real-estate; breakfasted with his old friends Mr. Arunachalam, the Hindu Registrar-General, and the Hon. Mr. Ramanathan, Tamil Member of the Governor's Council; had several interviews with the-High Priest Sumangala ; and attended to other Society affairs. At our Colombo Head-quarters, facing the charming lake, two very clever Japanese. priests are living, one sent by the erudite Akamatz, of the Mouto sect, to study Pali under Sumangala, the other by Professor Max Muller's favourite pupil, Ilunyu Nanjio, to learn. Sanscrit under Pandit Batwantudawe. Their' education finished, they are to return to Japan with sets of the Sinhalese Buddhist Scriptures, and devote themselves to the comparative study of the sacred books of the Northern and Southern canons. Thus has our Society served as the bridge over which will pass to and fro the most learned priests of the Mahayana and Hinayana—the “Greater Vehicle” and the

“Lesser Vehicle”—to exchange views about the primitive teaching of BUDDHA SAKYAMUNI, a *rapprochement* unknown since the great schism at the Vaisali Council two thousand one hundred years ago, which resulted in the formation of the two major bodies, the Northern and Southern Churches. In view of this impressive fact it is not unreasonable to count upon results of great- moment from the President's first tour in Japan. As he began his Ceylon work by convening, at Galle, a 'council of Priests of the Siam and Anuradapura sects, so he hopes to be able to call a similar one of the forty sects into which Japanese Buddhism is said to be divided. All good wishes-

Colonel Olcott's Departure to Japan

Our revered President-Founder left the shores of *Ceylon* upon his mission to Japan on the 17th January. His departure was quite dramatic. It fortunately happened, quite without pre-arrangement, that the Right Reverend High Priest Sumangala was preaching at the Theosophical, Hall on that evening, and the noble old Colonel and his young companion Mr. Dhammapala Hevanitarana entered the Hall and solemnly took Pansil, just before starting. The High Priest, after reciting the Pali Sutra which he had chosen as his text, spoke a few hearty words of friendly farewell to the voyagers before commencing his sermon. He said:—

“Once when our Lord Buddha wished to send some one to preach His Law to unknown and foreign. nations, an Arahat named Punna Thero, who was noted for his kindness and long-suffering, offered himself for the service.” Our Lord said to him

““Supposing when you preach to foreign and savage nations, the people, instead of hearing you gratefully, should revile you and heap abusive language upon you; what would be your feelings towards them?””

“Punna Thero replied:-

‘Lord, I should feel kindly and gratefully towards them, because they abused me only, but did not hustle or assault me.’

“But supposing that they proceeded, to hustle and assault you, what then?” continued our Lord.

‘Lord, I should still feel kindly and gratefully towards them, because, though they assaulted me, they yet did not injure me with weapons.’

“But if they did injure you with weapons, what then?” asked our Master.

“Lord, I should still feel kindly and gratefully towards them, in that although they thus injured me, they did not kill me.”

“But if they even proceeded to kill you, what would your feelings be?” “Lord, I should still feel kindly and gratefully towards them, because, having injured me so severely, they did not leave me to linger in agony and desire death in vain.”

“Then said our Blessed Lord: Go forth and preach, and prosper in your work; for you indeed are fit to carry my Law among the heathen.”

“Now Colonel Olcott is not yet an Arahat, nor are the people to whom he is going to preach heathens; they are Buddhists—followers of the same glorious Lord whom we obey, though perhaps it has not been their good fortune to preserve His teaching as pure, as unaffected by outer influences, as we in this favoured Island have been able to do. But yet Colonel Olcott possesses many of those qualities which so highly distinguished Punna Thero of old. He has frequently been abused, and his noble work unappreciated, but he has shown that he knows how to return good for evil, and to treat his bitterest opponents with kindness and

forbearance. He is the only person who could undertake and successfully carry out this missionary work for Buddhism, it is well therefore that our Japanese brothers have heard of the great good that he has done for our religion, and have sent for him to help them also.

“And his companion, Mr. Dhamapala Hevanitarana, who at an age when young men usually think of nothing but their own enjoyment, has devoted his whole life to the service of our glorious religion, is worthy to share the high honour of his task, and to be the first Sinhalese who sets foot upon the shores of Japan.

“My parting advice to them as they leave us for their noble work is that in whatever danger or difficulty they may find themselves, they will never forget the three Gems they have taken for their guide in whose strength they go forth—the LORD, the LAW, the ORDER: and I would charge them to bear in mind our Master’s words:—

Akkodhena jine kodhan.

Asadhun sadhuna jine.

“Which means”:-

Overcome another’s envy by your kindness.

Overcome bad people by your goodness.

“I invoke upon their heads all blessings of the Devas, and I ask you all to speed them on their way with your heartiest good wishes.”

The Hall was crowded to excess, but the entire assembly rose with one accord, and so, with the solemn blessing of the greatest Priest of the Southern Church, and amid the ringing cheers of their Buddhist brothers, our beloved President and his young companion passed forth to the work which has been given them to do.

C. W. LEADBEATER, (*Gen. Sec., Ceylon Section*)



Picture of a marble slab placed by C.W. Leadbeater at the Vijayananda Vihara, in Galle, to commemorate the site where H. S. Olcott and H. P. Blavatsky took the Panchasila before several Buddhist elders and became Buddhists, on 19 May 1880.