

# MARY MIKAHALA FOSTER

THE NOBLE HAWAIIAN LADY  
AND ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA



Ven. Ayya M.Vimalā Königsberg

Foreword : Prof. A.Thilakarathne



**MARY MIKAHALA FOSTER**

**The Noble Hawaiian Lady and  
Anagarika Dharmapala**



# **MARY MIKAHALA FOSTER**

## **The Noble Hawaiian Lady and Anagarika Dharmapala**

Ven. Ayya M.Vimala



**DEDICATION**

TO

H. STEEL OLCOTT

AND

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD





## PROLOGUE

One day, an unexpected visitor stood in front of my door. The Venerable Ayya Mie Vimala, saying that just recently she had arrived from Hawai'i.

She presented us a gift of a beautiful banner showing the Hawai'ian Flag with a photo of Mary Mikahala FOSTER and a separate photo.

The Venerable was rightly upset, I should say, as at the recent annual memorial celebration only less than a handful of people attended.

Mrs. Foster's memorial celebration has fallen into oblivion, not receiving the deserved attention, considering, that Mary Mikahala FOSTER, in Dharmapalas' own words, not only was his utmost generous Patron with munificent donations but also, as she offered, his 'foster mother'!

We are thankful for the effort the Venerable has taken up to revive the memory of M.M. Foster, also called 'Sudu Amma', and as open-minded as she is, dedicating her book in memory of 'two soul's, who also deserve to be remembered for the upliftment of Buddhism in Ceylon: Edwin Arnold and Col. Olcott.

We are grateful to Ayya Mie-Vimala and wish her a safe return to Hawai'i and success for her new project.

Nihal Weerasinghe  
Administrative Secretary  
Anagarika Dharmapala Trust  
Colombo 10  
Sri Lanka



## FOREWORD

What does the tiny group of islands called Hawai'i in the Pacific ocean have to do with the Buddhist renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

At this period when modern transport was in its infancy, the Pacific islands were really far away from India and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) and also from Europe. So the connection spoken of in this book appears to be widely separated by culture and space. Nevertheless, in a dependently arisen and causally conditioned reality time and space do not matter much for everything is connected to everything else.

The story that unfolds in the pages that you are about to turn is a fascinating account of how some events and persons far apart from one another by culture and space were brought together by circumstances to make a change, initially at some corners of Asia but subsequently in much of the western world. A young man of 29, later to be known as Anagarika Dharmapala, was chosen by the Sri Lanka Buddhist leaders to represent Theravada Buddhism at the historic meeting of World Parliamentary of Religions, held in Chicago city in 1893.

Dharmapala already had exposure to the West owing to his association with Henry Steel Olcott and Annie Blavatsky who landed in Ceylon in 1880 and started working with the local Buddhist leaders who were active in ushering Buddhist revival. Thanks to his education at missionary schools and his urban family background, Dharmapala spoke English fluently. He went to Chicago via Atlantic and on his way he stopped in London where he was welcome by Edwin Arnold, one of the two people to whom this book is dedicated, who was the first to give the

message of the Buddha to the West from his much acclaimed work *The Light of Asia*, and met some leading Orientalists and admirers of Buddhism including Rhys Davids, who studied Pali and Buddhist texts in Ceylon while he was serving in the Colonial rule there and, having returned to the UK established Pali Text Society for the publication of Pali Buddhist texts.

Dharmapala was a success story in Chicago where he represented not merely Ceylon, the small Theravada Buddhist nation, but also 470 million Buddhists of all three Buddhist schools all over the world. He traveled back via Pacific, and when he reached Honolulu among those who came to receive him was Mary M. Foster, an aristocratic Lady with substance. The encounter was mutually beneficial: the latter received counseling on how to be in charge of her emotions and the former a life-long continued tremendous munificent for his work in India, Ceylon, and Britain.

Since then Dharmapala visited Hawai'i several times, and in one of those visits Dhammapala brought a Bodhi sapling which Mary Foster planted in her family estate known as 'Foster Garden', located in Oahu (one among the six Hawai'ian islands where Honolulu, the capital is located). The Bodhi Tree is still there although one does not find people offering flowers, lighting oil lamps or circumambulating around as one finds in Sri Lanka.

When I first visited Hawai'i in 1984 as an East-West Center grantee to pursue my graduate studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa I was fascinated to see the Buddhist presence in many places in the Hawai'ian Islands. Buddhism was practiced there mainly by the Hawai'ian Japanese, Chinese and Korean communities is Mahayana among whose practice the worship of Bodhi tree did not feature prominently. Consequently, the Bodhi tree in the Foster Garden was not known among the local

Buddhist communities. Those who took care of the garden too did not seem to know about it except that it was an old tree. I was shown another Bodhi tree by a local Chinese business person who had developed a housing scheme in the northern side of the Oahu. He had heard that this tree too had been brought by a visiting Buddhist indicating its origin to Dharmapala, and he left the tree intact for its historical value.

The Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Hawai'i has always been small with very few families of permanent citizens and a small community of graduate students with fluctuating numbers. But everyone knew about the presence of the Bodhi Tree. I was told about the tree in my first meeting with the late professor D.J Kalupahana, the most well known Sri Lankan Buddhist to live in Hawai'i and who also was my graduate advisor under whose guidance I completed my graduate studies. Notwithstanding this awareness of the presence of the sacred tree, the Foster Garden Bodhi Tree was never to become an object of worship mainly due to its specific location in a botanical garden. The sacredness, however, is ultimately not something that belongs to an object so considered but a sentiment and an attitude of people who have a specific set of beliefs.

At the author is a Board Member of the Hawai'i Association of International Buddhist and recently established a friendship with the "Friends of Honolulu Botanical Garden", where since several years a Mary Foster birthday celebration is organized, we can be assured that with the participation of the Japanese Temples, the significance of the Bodhi Tree will be kept alive.

Whether or not one is aware of its sacredness, the tree remains a testimony to worldwide Buddhist activism that connected far off lands and people in reviving Buddhism in the land of its origin in particular. Mary Foster became the utmost strength behind

Anagarika Dhamapala, thus, both in their friendship dedicated their lives for the Buddha Sasana.

It is of particular significance that this story is told by another distinguished lady who, although originating from Koenigsberg, East Prussia, has made Hawai'i her second home, Sri Lanka being her first spiritual home since 1983, and was admitted to the Buddhist nunhood in 1992. I met the author first when I was studying in Hawai'i, and we have been in contact since then. I consider it a privilege that I was asked to write a foreword to this well-researched book which is for both, the general reader interested in inspirational reading as well as the serious student of the modern history of Buddhism. I congratulate Ayya Vimala on successfully completing this work, and wish her good health, happiness, and longevity so that the world will continue to benefit from her immense compassion!

Asanga Tilakaratne, PhD  
Former Professor of Buddhist Studies,  
University of Colombo  
& Editor-in-chief, Encyclopedia of Buddhism,  
Ministry of Buddha Sasana, Colombo.

## INTRODUCTION

Sometimes extraordinary things can happen, even more than one, to someone destined for such an experience.

It happened that due to my holiday visit to Ceylon in 1983, instead of exploring India, to which I felt great affection, already involved in yoga practice and reading all about the famous Yogi's – Swamis and being a great admirer of R. Tagore, the visit to Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka, brought a dramatic change.

Reading about and meeting the Ven. Nyanaponika Mahathero, an elder German scholar-monk/Bhikkhu in Kandy, I felt such an affinity, that I followed in his footsteps. Thus Sri Lanka became also my Dhamma-home. Mysteriously the Venerable has been living in Königsberg, the city I was born, although twenty years earlier.

And Königsberg is not just any city and not only a particular location, but famous in history.

Thus subsequently I came almost every second year to Kandy the following time of ten years.

But at one time, while spending the fall in California and on the way to Japan, friends suggested to make half-way a stop in "Hawai'i".

I had no idea, but it was love at first sight, walking through the large green Kapiolani Park right at the ocean. Therefore, nothing different could be expected than to return and luckily even to live there as a resident for more than ten years.

In this way it happened that I have been living on those two Islands, Oahu-Hawai'i and Sri Lanka.

Now, there is a story of two people, living far apart from each other, even of different nations, but somehow meant to meet.

One is from the island Ceylon/Sri Lanka, the Anagarika Dharmapala and the other person from Hawai'i, which is Mary Mikahala Foster.

A word about Hawai'i: consisting of the mayor four islands = Hawai'i, called 'Big island', Oahu with the capital Honolulu, Maui and Kauai. After the Islands had been united as one country, it was named after the 'Big Island' = Hawai'i.

About Dharmapala: while on a visit to India, he fell in great despair to see the sacred Buddhist sites in a very desolated, ruined condition. This resulted in the desire to establish a Mahabodhi Society. Subsequently, due to the patronage of MMF, Anagarika Dharmapala was able to establish the final ever outside of Sri Lanka, the London Vihara in 1926. In India, he took care that the temple of Bodh Gaya and in Sarnath could be restored. And in Calcutta/Kolkata, after moving the MBS in 1892 the "Sri Dharmarajika Chatiya" was built.

About Mary Mikahala Foster: the Noble Hawai'ian Lady. It was in 1893, that she met Anagarika Dharmapala, when on his way back home, his steamer made a stop at Honolulu. Thus an extraordinary friendship began. She became his most generous and munificent benefactor in the quest of his commitment.

I have been writing several articles about Mary Mikahala Foster which had been published in different issues in the "Buddhist Times", Colombo. Considering the tremendous donations she had provided I found this very much unjust to keep so much silence about her.

Here some of the articles are combined, some remained in its original text and some new have been added.



When I came back in December 2013 to Sri Lanka, I had even more opportunities to read in several articles of Anagarika Dharmapala, but again-barely was the name of Mary Mikahala Foster mentioned.

Thus I was inspired to write a little booklet about Mary Mikahala Foster, of which the MBS, Colombo, kindly printed some hundred copies which were freely distributed on the occasion of the annual celebration of Anagarika Dharmapala. He had been presented on a large banner, but no sign of recognition of MMF, later I discovered a photo of her in a frame placed at the bottom of a column.

Thereupon I created a beautiful banner and donated it, hopefully be used in future celebrations.

Another banner donation I made was to the Anagarika Dharmapala Trust who by the request of Anagarika Dharmapala was used to celebrate her birthday. But it seemed it has fallen into negligent which brought me into tears: less than a handful came. Even it was the 85th death anniversary. Just as well to the 'Foster Robinson Ayurvedic Free Clinic', which was built with the donation of Mary Mikahala Foster as a memorial to her late father.

As we know from history, sometimes extraordinary personalities are honored by changing street name into their names, which I discovered in Colombo: "Foster Lane", of which I took a photo.

Another interesting discovery was, right here in Kandy, right at the lake that in 1929, with the donation of MMF, Anagarika Dharmapala purchased a property and the house was converted into the "Foster Buddhist Seminary", in those days. Ven. Dr. U. Dhammaratana joined the Seminary, but 1931, on the invitation

of Anagarika Dhammapala he came to India to study at the Benaras Hindu University and at the University of Calcutta and made Sarnath his center. Later he became the general secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society, India. He passed away in 1985.

After reading the note and myself living in Kandy, I asked some people I became to know about the Foster Buddhist Seminary. Amazing that some really knew about this matter and gave me a hint. The house stands now within the premises of the property of the "Mahamaya Girls College".

One day, equipped with several small books from the Buddhist Publication Society as a gift, I went to the office of the MGC, to meet the school director. Discussing the matter, I was directed to the house which contained some items and photos in general and of Anagarika Dharmapala. Considering that it was named Foster Buddhist Seminary, one can not but wonder why there is not at least one photo of MMF.

I even on several personal occasions talked with the Kandy city mayor. With some items of MMF the house could have been transformed into a small museum, just 20 rupees as entrance fee to be used for the maintenance - but no - no interest in valuable preservation. Well, so much for this chapter.

I wished I could have to been able to visit one more time Bodh Gaya or Sarnath. But at least I was able to make a last trip to South India, of the months February 2017. It was the last journey of inquiry which has been to Madras / Chennai in Tamil Nadu. Please read about this adventure in "Searching Trip to Chennai".

Now closing my Introduction I should recall that the friendship between Mary Foster and Dharmapala lasted for forty years until she passed away in 1930.

Also, I like the reader to keep in mind that some of the original articles (published mostly in the Buddhist Times, Colombo) had been combined, some new texts have been added some remained in its original, therefore some facts and stories unavoidable are repeated. Nevertheless, I hope, that the reader will not only enjoy this little book but those who feel a connection also honor in memory and join the celebrations of these outstanding personalities, who gave their lives to the Noble Dhamma.

Thank you – Mahalo



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### Native Hawaiian Flag

IT is said to have been Kamehameha's (1758-1819) personal flag long before the modern Hawaiian flag



**Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Mikahala Foster of Honolulu,**  
*The great Benefactress of the Maha-Bodhi Society.*





## JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY HAWAI'I AND MARY MIKAHALA FOSTER

Once, after enjoying a summer and fall in California, I was sad to leave due to the refusal of a Visa-extension, which was simply because I was given the wrong form to fill in the airplane.

To avoid the cold European winter, I decided to make a visit to Kyushu (Japan), best known for having a mild winter. When I told my Thai friend, she suggested, that when you like to enjoy sunny warm weather, make a stopover half the way in Hawai'i; Honestly, I had no idea. But what an incredible suggestion that was and very much tempting, who does not dream of Hawai'i, let alone be there.

It became a week of a life dream, a deep love which cannot be expressed in words. For sure, one day I had to come back. (It was even meant for a much greater happening and a very personal discovery.)

Now, the funny thing, quite ironically, stepping out of the plane in Kyushu, what expected me: SNOW!

Anyway, a year later I was back to my paradise! The most amazing and beautiful green Park, the Kapiolani Park in Honolulu, was a long large stretch right at the ocean! Another amazing surprise came while taking a bus ride through the magnificent green hills with their particular shaped mountains, where surprising with a sign 'PALI-High-way',

I thought: How get the word PALI here? Of course, I was thinking of our PALI CANON, well, in Hawai'ian it means rock/cliff. Just minutes later another surprise, as it were high in the

sky, a white silhouette in the shape of a dagoba/chetiya, like we have here, how is that possible? Well, it belongs to the Japanese Temple Honpa Hongwanji, a 20feet high dome on top of the shrine room, constructed as a replica of the Indian Dagoba Gandhara-style.

In the years to come, I had many opportunities to enjoy the temple and facilities on various occasions of different celebrations.

### *MISFORTUNE – FORTUNE*

*A Japanese Proverb  
'Even after three years a  
misfortune may turnout  
to be of benefit'*

What look like a misfortune, became a great blessing, finding Paradise Island and Mary Mikahala Foster

## BODHI TREES AROUND THE WORLD

### HAWAI'I

For the tourist in Hawai'i, here in Honolulu, one can find amazingly numerous free magazines like Oahu, 100 Things To Do and This Week. Several of the most famous attractions are diverse open-air shopping malls with ocean views, Punchbowl Crater Cemetery, Aloha Tower at the Harbor and Arizona Memorial. A less great attraction but not less of interest is right in the city, a garden, called Foster Botanical Garden, not too small but also not that big, but beautiful. I found it of not too much interest for me as I have been visiting the maybe largest Botanical Garden in the world, which is the Peradeniya Botanical Garden, at Peradeniya-Kandy, in Sri Lanka. One great attraction is the giant Jawa Willow Tree, shading an area of over 1900sq.m.

Yet recently I became very interested in the Foster Botanical Garden, hearing from friends that there is a Bodhi-Tree, which of course arose my interest to visit the one day. Garden and, there is a great story behind connected to Sri Lanka. It is the story of Mrs. Mary Mikahala Foster and Anagarika Dharmapala. (A word to her first name: it is somewhat difficult to comprehend why mostly her Hawai'ian first name **Mikahala** is rarely mentioned by her family members, maybe due to the time of the British influence, but as a Royal Hawai'ian descendant, I prefer and like to include this beautiful name.)

A part of her residential property was first designed as a garden with some indigenous Flora and ornamental plants. It has been taken care of by Mr. F.C. Rock and Harald Lyon.

Mary Mikahala Foster the Noble Hawai'ian Lady was born in September 1844 in Honolulu, a native Hawai'ian Lady and came from a prominent family that was partly descended from Hawai'ian Royalty.



Maha Bodhi Society of India,  
Kolkata

After her husband, Capt. Thomas Foster, passed away in 1889, she became interested in Buddhism, also being a member of the Theosophical Society. In 1893 Chicago came in the spotlight of the world as the guest home for the World Parliament of Religions. Anagarika Dharmapala was invited as the Buddhist Delegate from Sri Lanka. His success was radio fused across the globe resulting in lecture tours to Japan and China. He returned on board of the steamer from Chicago to Japan via Honolulu as a stopover. While boarding the S.S. Oceanic in the Harbor of Honolulu, he met Mrs. Foster. She approached him wishing to know whether Buddhism could help her to deal with her emotions. Practicing the advice given, she found amazing results. As a result, she began to send small contributions to Dharmapala. In 1902, upon Dharmapalas request, Mrs. Foster provided donations to establish facilities for children in India and Sri Lanka, and a new Vihara for the Maha Bodhi Society, Sarnath, which was founded by Anagarika Dharmapala in 1893. Also, a first Vihara in Calcutta was build as well as the first Theravada Vihara in London.

In June 1913, when Anagarika visited Mrs. Foster in Honolulu, he received another generous donation to build The Foster Robinson Ayurvedic Clinic, named in memory of her late father in 1920 Mrs. Foster made another most generous donation with a covering letter asking the Anagarika to live in comfort and continue the good work he was doing.

From this donation was also purchased a house property in Kandy, right at the lake and converted into the: "Foster Buddhist Seminary" in those days.



Kandy Lake Scenery

After discovering this fact, I asked some people I became acquainted with. Amazingly one gentlemen know about this matter and gave me a hint. The house stands now within the premises of the property of the "Mahamaya Girls College".

One day, equipped with several small books from the Buddhist Publication Society as a donation, I went to the office of the MGC, to meet the school director. Discussing the matter, I was directed to the house which contained some items and photos in general and of Anagarika Dharmapala. Considering that it was named Foster Buddhist Seminary, one can not but wonder why there is not at least one photo of Mary Mikahala Foster, not a single sign or document.

I even on several personal occasions talked with the Kandy city mayor. With some items of Mary Mikahala Foster, the house could have been transformed into a small museum, just 20 rupees as entrance fee to be used for the maintenance – but no – no interest in valuable preservation. Well, that much for this chapter.

Mary Foster once visited Ceylon in 1893 and took the opportunity to study and get some Dhamma instructions by the Theros at the monastery of Anuradhapura.

This seems to be doubtful, as the religious conference in Chicago took place in the month of September 1893 as a meeting was very short and to make to trip to Ceylon within the three months of the year, it is very difficult to imagine.

The Thero's from the Anuradhapura Vihara sent in gratitude through A Dharmapalas visit to Honolulu in June 1913, a cutting from the Bo - Tree which is the scion of the historic tree in Bodh Gaya, under which the Buddha had attained supreme Awakening - Enlightenment. From this historic tree, an offspring was brought to Lanka-Ceylon in 288 B.C by the Arahat Bhikkhuni Sangamitta.

At the Foster Garden, the cutting from Anuradhapura was carefully planted and nurtured over the years by loving and dedicated hands. Growing to a really huge Bo Tree, that graces the Foster Botanical Garden in Honolulu till today and hopefully for centuries.

Mrs. Foster is still loved and honored in Colombo. Her birthday anniversary is celebrated by the Anagarika Dharmapala Trust at the Vidyodaya Pirivena and with an annual dana at the Foster Robinson Ayurvedic Clinic in Colombo.

And monthly Puja at the Foster Robinson ayurvedic clinic in Colombo.

In her honor is also a street named Foster Lane.

Mrs. Foster Noble and Sacrificing spirit to the teaching of the Buddha, contributed the most precious gift to Hawai'i.

### MAHALO MIKAHALA FOSTER



In her honor a street in Colombo is named Foster Lane

## ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA MEETS MARY MIKAHALA FOSTER

In 1893 Chicago came in the spotlight of the world as the guest home for the World Parliament of Religion.



Honolulu Harbor with famous  
ALOHA TOWER

As the delegate from Sri Lanka to represent Buddhism, it was Anagarika Dharmapala, who was invited. His success was radio fused across the globe, resulting in lecture tours to Japan and China. He returned on board of a steamer from Chicago via HONOLULU (Oahu-Hawai'i), as a stopover. And there, in the middle of the

Pacific a life-changing meeting of two great personalities took place:

Anagarika Dharmapala and MIKAHALA FOSTER, a native Hawai'ian Lady of royal lineage. Although the people of Hawai'i and the native Hawai'ian elites, who had been converted by Christian missionaries, Mrs. Foster was confounded by her family, as at that time, she had already opened her home and heart to other religious traditions.

In their short meeting, they exchanged their interests in diverse topics. She also wished to know of Buddhist meditation, which



could help her to deal with emotions. Finding amazing results and being moved by Anagarikas dream to restore/return the most sacred Buddhist site into the hands of the Buddhist Sangha she offered her support and patronage. She offered not only monetary help, but also established a Trust Fund, which would allow him to establish various facilities, as for children in Sri Lanka as well as in India. Also, a first Vihara in Calcutta was built as the beautiful Sri Dharmarajika Chaitiya Vihara, the modern Mulagandhakuti Vihara in Sarnath, which was built 1930/31 by the Maha Bodhi Society Colombo and the first Theravada Vihara outside of Sri Lanka was established in London, England.

Between the years of 1913 to 1920, Mikahala FOSTER made another tremendous donation for his good work and wishing him to live in comfort.

True to this exceptional friendship and munificence, **he didn't miss to leave a statement...**

## A LETTER FROM ANAGARIKA

Fortune played into my hands in regard to writing this book. Meeting the publisher of the Buddhist Times in Colombo, I received several old issues I had missed. While leaving through each issue, one headline caught my attention: 'A Letter from Anagarika'.

'Buddhism in England, Maha Bodhi Journal, November 1926, in BT July 2013'

In this letter to the Maha Bodhi Society, he writes:

"All the good deeds that I have done I owe to her, and from the year 1904, all the good work I have done in India and Ceylon is due to the generous munificence of my 'foster mother' Mrs. Mary M. FOSTER of HONOLULU. But for her wonderful liberality and personal affection, I would never have accomplished the work that I had undertaken. May she live long enjoying happiness in both mind and body".

The friendship and mutual spiritual quest between Mrs. Mikahala Foster and the Anagarika Dharmapala lasted for forty years until she passed away in 1930.

(A word to her first name: it is somewhat difficult to comprehend why mostly her Hawai'ian first name MIKAHALA is rarely mentioned by her family members, maybe due to the time of the British influence, but as a Royal Hawai'ian descendant, I prefer and like to include this beautiful name.)

SHE deserves to be loved and remembered for her noble and sacrificing spirit to the Dhamma, the Teaching of the Buddha.



#### A Letter from Anagarika

"Buddhism in England' Maha Bodhi Journal,  
November 1926, in BT July 2013"

Fortune played into my hands in regard of writing these several articles about Mary Mikahala FOSTER and Anagarika Dharmapala:

Meeting the Publisher of the Buddhist Times in Colombo, I received several old issues I missed, due to my moving from Hawai'i back to Sri Lanka. While leafing through each issue, one headline caught my attention.

It is heart-rending to read about some of his hardships. But what is important here is, that Anagarika Dharmapala mentions twice Mary Mikahala



FOSTER, as the Patron of the Maha Bodhi Society and her support, but most important his statement:

"All the good deeds that I have done I owe to her, and from the year 1904 all the good work that I have done in India and Ceylon is due to the generous munificence of my 'foster mother', Mrs. MARY E. FOSTER of HONOLULU.

But for her wonderful liberality and personal affection I would never have accomplished the work that I had undertaken. May she live long enjoying happiness in both mind and body".

## FOSTER BOTANICAL GARDEN



Another attraction in Town

As I became mostly occupied with a very personal matter and the opportunity to study at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and especially knowing from my many previous times in Kandy, where probably the largest Botanical Garden of the world is situated at Peradeniya, I was not too interested to visit this Garden.

Yet one day I found out that right there, in this Garden, would be a 'BODHI TREE', which sounded unbelievable, which of course then had to be inquired into and to be seen.



**Mary Foster deserving of celebration in her honor**

Now and here, we come and turn to the trace of an extraordinary HAWAIIAN LADY, Mary Mikahala FOSTER. It is a story with a tie to Sri Lanka.

Finally making my way to the Foster Garden, I was taken aback to see almost

right after the entrance a huge magnificent tree with its particular shape of the leaves of the Bodhi Tree.

But how did the Foster Garden came into existence: During the days that Mrs. Foster owned and lived on the land in Nu'uuanu, she gave a portion of her land for a nursery of tropical plants, which expanded to a 5-acre site with famous trees and plants. At the end of her life she donated this priceless Garden to the City and County of Honolulu, and since then became known as the **'Mother of Honolulu Botanical Garden'**.



Open office at entrance of Foster Botanical Garden

In the year 2006, being a Board Member of the Hawai'ian Association of International Buddhists, I was introduced to the 'Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens' and received an invitation to the first 'Mary Foster Birthday Festival: Celebrating Foster Garden.' A Proclamation was inaugurated and signed by the City Mayor of Honolulu.



## KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

*Aloha kākou!*

*It is a joy and deep pleasure to bring to light the name, works and life of Mary Foster. As we honor her birthday with celebrations at Foster Garden, let it be shared under this new century sun that here was a spirit before her time.*

*I first 'met' Mary Foster in Sarnath, India. There, at the site where the Buddha gave his first dharma talks, was a beautiful, small and significant temple with a sign that told us it was built through the generous support of Mrs. Mary Foster of Honolulu, Hawaii. I believe the date was 1919. I recall a welling in my heart for this as-yet unknown patroness who came from my beloved homeland.*

*Why had I not known of this unusual and open-minded Hawaiian woman in any discussions or history books? What was her life like as a turn-of-the-century woman with her own style and ideas? How did the study of Theosophy shape her thoughts? Why did she really start the Mahabodhi Society in a country so textured with need? What was the role of Buddhism in her life?*

*Mary Foster was a rare and unique human being. We are pausing to honor what she believed in and what she gave to the people of Hawaii. She is a role model for me during these times of fear-driven morals and uninspiring social ideas. She was her own person, dedicated to expanding her mind and increasing the purpose of her heart.*

*It is quite an honor to wish her a joyful marking of her birth. *Hau'oli la hānau e ke koa wahine a Hawai'inuiākea.**

*Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer  
Associate Professor of Education  
University of Hawaii at Hilo*

**IN RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARY FOSTER.**

**Ka hā'awi a ka mea hale, koe koena 'ole ma kū'ono. Said of a person who gives freely of all he has. (Pukui, 'Ōlelo No'eau)**

# Proclamation

*Mikahala*

WHEREAS, Mary Foster was born on September 20, 1844, as the oldest child of James Robinson, a British citizen and shipbuilder, and Rebecca Prever; and

WHEREAS, she married Thomas Foster, a shipbuilder from Nova Scotia in 1860, and they acquired the house and garden of Dr. William Hillebrand in 1880, which featured an extraordinary collection of tropical and sub-tropical plants; and

WHEREAS, Mary Foster spent many years adding numerous trees and shrubs to the Hillebrand garden, including her cherished Bo tree, which was a gift from the Mañia Bodhi Society and was a cutting from the tree under which the Buddha is thought to have received enlightenment; and

WHEREAS, in 1916, she leased two acres to the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association, and the tree nursery established there provided seedlings to all of Oahu and the neighbor islands for many years; and

WHEREAS, upon her death in 1930, the 5.5-acre site of her historic garden was bequeathed to the City and County of Honolulu and is now known as the Foster Botanical Garden; and

WHEREAS, the world-famous garden contains 25 of Hawaii's designated "exceptional trees" and is viewed by more than 75,000 visitors from around the world and thousands of school children each year; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens will present the Mary Foster Birthday Bash on September 24, 2006, in recognition of her generous gift to our islands;

NOW THEREFORE, I, MUFU HANNEMANN, Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu, do hereby proclaim September 20, 2006, to be

## MARY FOSTER DAY

to honor her enduring legacy of this historic and significant garden, and in deep appreciation to the Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens for its dedicated support of Oahu's complex of five botanical gardens.

Done this 8<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2006,  
in Honolulu, Hawaii.

*(signed by MUFU HANNEMANN)*

# Mary Foster Birthday Festival

September 24, 2006

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Celebrating Foster Garden

Mary Mikahala Foster's

Great Gift

to the City of Honolulu



Presented by  
The Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

A private non-profit organization  
*Supporting these gardens for 45 years*



## *Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens*



180 N.Vineyard Boulevard, Honolulu, HI 96817 Ph. (808) 537-1708 Fax (808) 537-6274

### **FRIENDS OF HONOLULU BOTANICAL GARDEN (FHBG)**

In 2007, the Chairman of the FHBG, Mr. Paul Weissich, invited me to contribute my ideas to the program. The Drums of the Taiko Group of the Honpa Hongwanji Temple paid their tribute as the land on which the Temple stands, was also donated by Mrs. Foster to the Bishop in 1906 with the words: "This land is yours"!

And there is no celebration which goes without ALOHA and the Hawai'ian Chant, which is very touching. We had the pleasure of having the Hawai'ian Lady, Dr.Manulani Aluli, to bless the Festival with her chanting and telling her story, how she, when visiting Sarnath, India, learnt about Mikahala Foster, who was also Hawai'ian.

The discovery is the story of Anagarika Dharmapala, meeting Mrs. FOSTER in Honolulu on the way back to Sri Lanka, after attending the World Parliament of Religion in 1893. She became his devoted supporter and patroness for his work in India and Sri Lanka. She even had made a visit to Sri Lanka, visiting Anuradhapura, where she received some Dhamma instructions. In 1913, Anagarika Dharmapala made another visit to Hawai'i and in gratitude to Mikahala Foster, he did bring along a sapling from the Bodhi Tree, which is a cutting of the historical tree in Bodh Gaya.

It is from this historical tree, that in ca. 288BC, the arahat Bhikkhuni Sangamitta had brought a branch to Sri Lanka.

I can't explain it, but whenever I heard the Hawai'ian chanting and even the Hawai'ian Anthem, I was always moved deeply to tears. To learn more about this Hawai'ian Lady, I had done some research at the University Archive as well at the Hawai'ian State Archives, spending many hours.

At the same time I tried to find out about her Grabmal and the location of the cemetery.

# Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

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# Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

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Lennis Kim

October 3, 2007

1st Vice President  
Paul Weissich

Dear Friend, Dear Ayya,

2nd Vice President  
Adelaide Kistner

It was a pleasure meeting you at the Mary Foster Birthday Festival.

3rd Vice President  
Bill Davenport Lum

We will contact you early in 2007 to seek your help in obtaining more Buddhist programming.

Secretary  
Chris Taylor Clarke

Mahalo. I look forward to seeing you again. November 3, 2006.

Treasurer  
Thomas Lalakea

Dear Ayya, I don't have any way of contacting M. Chaktavarty of the Thai dance group. Would you please inform that there is reserved parking in Foster Garden entry.

Mahalo

September 17, 2007

Board of Trustees

Robert Boom  
Heidi Bernhorst  
Jeremy Bush  
Grace Dixon  
Ray T. Higa  
Carol Kim  
Fred Lau  
Mary Jane Lee  
Robert W.H. Lum  
Louis Martin  
McDaniel Wheelon

Mahalo nui loa,



Paul Weissich, Chairman  
Mary Foster Birthday Festival



Larger view of the cemetery at Wilder Avenue, Honolulu

## THE BUDDHIST MEMORIAL PUJA

One day, after searching in town for the location of the cemetery, I thought it was time and I felt that I should and would like to place some flowers at her Grabmal on the day of her birthday. It was sad to see that it was not well-taken care of.



Part view of the grave obelisk

Many years passed before I return to Sri Lanka, to pursue further studies, but one important thing was left for me to do: It has been her wish to have a Buddhist Chant/puja at her funeral, which did-of course-not happen, as I was told.



Chant and pouring  
blessed water

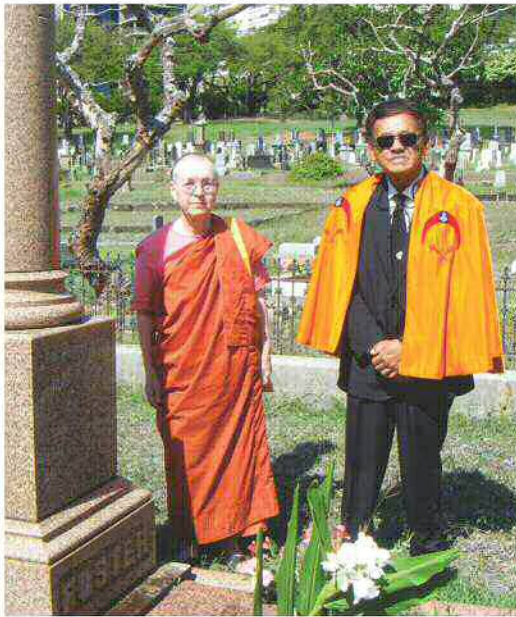
So, how do arrange this? First I discussed this with the Abbot of the Thai Vihara, who was most kind. From the Hawai'ian side, I discussed the whole story with a gentleman I have known for many years, a Hawai'ian Ali'i,

which means of Royal descendant, the second in line of the 'Royal Hawai'ian Order'!

So one day we set the meeting at the cemetery and performed and offered for Mikahala Foster the missing Buddhist puja. This gave me great peace of mind and happiness before leaving my beloved Hawai'i, surely to return not too far away.

Let me close this story with the Hawai'ian words of Dr. Aluli :

'Hau'oli la hanau e ke koa wahine a Hawai'inuiakea'



showing the Hawaiian Ali'i and myself at the obelisk

## HONOLULU INTERMEZZO

Time passed fast and the right moment for the final return has passed. Time has elapsed.

But suddenly, again inspirations came upon me getting 'Von der muse gekusst' and the pen wouldn't stop.

Although in the middle of several manuscripts – at least fro a special birthday by wanted to be back, although only a few months. And the same time, lucky it covered the moment of the 'Foster Celebration'. I had prepared a nice banner as a gift and after several phone calls with the president of the Friends of Foster Garden, Mrs. Seymour, we e met at the Bodhi Tree and enjoyed the celebration with stories, especially for my Hawai'ian Ali'i friend, who gladly joined us and was attended by about 30 people supporter of the Foster Garden.

Now I am back in Kandy all the effort goes to finished the manuscripts some ready for publishing, and getting myself ready.



Decorating the banner of Mary Foster at the Foster Botanical Garden on her birthday celebration on September 2017



The Bodhi Tree at the Foster Botanical Garden is a cutting from the Bodhi Tree of Anuradhapura which is itself the scion of the historic tree in Bodh Gaya



## SEARCHING TRIP TO CHENNAI

What a great blessing that by chance, or by circumstances, sometimes one has a really good idea. Actually, I was in need for another Visa extension in Sri Lanka. Luckily a great thought arose in my mind: how about to take a break and visit one more time India?! Yes, that would be the best.

That would also be a much needed time to take a rest after more than three years of hard work writing my books.

Accidentally by pure chance, it happened that I was at the right time at the right place. I would be able to undertake personally particular research locally, there and then about the “FOSTER HOUSE” of 1891” in Perambur-Chennai. My first trip to Madras, now called Chennai was about twenty years ago. My first clue for help and information was to stop at the Maha Bodhi Society. As they did not provide me with a room to stay, only for Srilankans, I had to find a Hotel. Just a few steps on the other side of the street was a nice and suitable Hotel, Hotel Pandian and as I would stay one month, the kind Reception gave me a special price and a really very nice room, even with TV. The first week was just for resting and in the evening I enjoyed strolling through all the different Channels, so very much interesting, even two Channels had a Buddhist program.

Here comes the first “right place-right time”. A famous Guru had an all-night, from 6 pm till 6 am, inauguration celebration about the presentation of the huge bust of Adi-Yogi.

For sure I would did join by watching all night. It is really something to stay awake all night, and as thousands did, it was LIVE.

With my tablet, I tried to take photos from the TV screen and they are that good as if I would have used a camera and been there in person, just fantastic.

Now let's have a look at my main purpose: to find the location of the Foster House, which would be in Perambur. Considering that more than 100 years have passed, it is doubtful that it might still exist.

In the beginning, the Bhikkhu-in-charge at the MB was not very welcoming, but later, knowing my purpose, tried to be more helpful.

As usual, around a Hotel, there are many three-wheeled, and the one I used to take me around luckily knew Perambur. So, one day we set out for our discovery. I had to find the street “**Paddy Field**” Road and the house number 41.



After about half-an-hour drive on the main road, he made a left turn. It was not yet the street I was looking for, but a big surprise was right there, a big sign of a small Vihara entrance and a large board “The South India Buddhist Association- Lord Buddha’s Temple”.



Perambur-Madras Vihara

At that moment I did not connect it to the Foster House.

We made two more turns, the streets were now narrow, and there was our street.

It was quite long, so we drove down, first right side and going back left side, but the house number I could not see, maybe by sitting inside, although driving very slowly. So I decided to walk the street up and down, checking every single house. No, nothing. Crossing the small junction I recognized that the street had a small continuing part with few houses.

Hurray, and there it was.

The family living in the house, of course, did not know anything about the matter. But what I suddenly recognized was, that the 'Foster House' is exactly on the backside of the 'Lord Buddha Temple'. (The South India Buddhist Association) We tried several times the phone number mentioned on the board, but no answer, but as it was getting late we had to go back. The three-wheel driver tried himself a few times to reach someone, but no success. Therefore after one week had passed, we made another trip, hoping for more luck as the board mentioned an evening schedule, but again, nobody came.

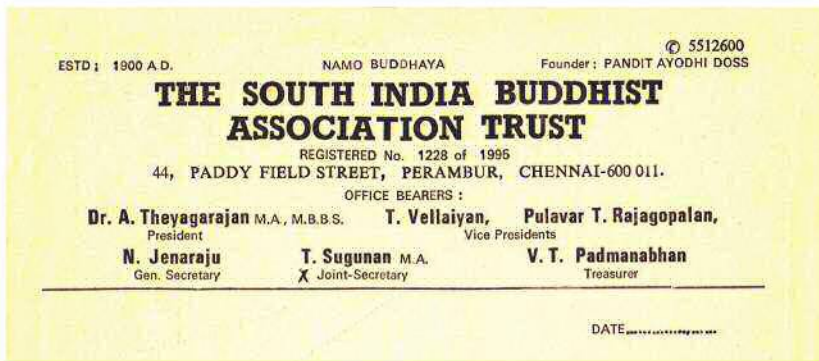
In the meantime, I talked to the Bhikkhu-in-charge of my discovery of the 'The South India Buddhist Association' and that the Foster House is exactly on the backside. He confirmed that once it was one property, but later was parcelled-out to reduce expenses.

Now my last week was approaching, so I had to give it another trial. This time, luckily, the door was open and an elderly couple greeted me, with somewhat surprise, Mr. & Mrs. Sugunan as he introduce himself. The information on the present situation he was about to tell me was really sad. Because of the lack of members and due to their old age, the Vihara is no longer in service.

Once a while with an assistant they would go to check the property.

But while spending the time and looking around, some old books and papers were kept on a table. But they could remember that Anagarika Dharmapala lived there for a time and his secretary was Pandit Ayodidass. When the estate was purchased it came under the Maha Bodhi Society. Another information was that Mr. Karunayakas, after the retirement from the Maha Bodhi Society in 1969 became in charge of the Maha Bodhi Ashram in Perambur. Another personality who was in charge of the Maha Bodhi Ashram was Ven. N.Somananda Nayaka Thero, supported by the Buddhist leader of Madras Prof. Lakshmi Narasu.

Mr. Sugunan kindly presented me with an old letter sheet with the letterhead of the Society.



It was indeed very sad to leave this old couple who had given their service for a long time and now almost left alone. I better inquire about the connection between Lord Buddha Temple and South India Buddhist Association.

Here I'm dealing with three puzzles which need clarification.

Now it is almost insane: a day after day my puzzles are solved miraculously.

- so, how and why a Maha Bodhi in Madras? It is not a Buddhist Holy place.

It is mentioned that Dharmapalas secretary, while he was living in **Perambur**-Madras, was a Pandit Ayodidass, born in 1845 in Anna-Salai, Chennai. Most amazingly the name was mentioned in Wikipedia: A prominent Tamil, a Siddha physician with knowledge of philosophy and as well as in languages such as English, Sanskrit, and Pali. But also known as an anti-cast activist and involved in Buddhist movements, the South India Sakya Buddhist Movements.

Prominent names go around: he met Col. Olcott and Srimath Anagarika Dharmapala was inspired by his activities.

Another prominent leading Tamil Buddhist was Prof. Lakshmi Narasu (Prof.of physics) Between 1909-15 he wrote his book 'The Essence of Buddhism' with an introduction by Srimath Dharmapala.

With Col. Olcotts help, both were able to visit Ceylon and took 'refuge' under the Nayake Thero Sumangala. With the Funds of Mary Mikahala Foster, Dharmapala purchased some land in **Perambur**-Madras and one building was named 'Foster Hall'. But with Ayodidass and Narasu as co-founder, it was in 1909, named 'South India Buddhist Association to be used and dedicated for the Tamil Buddhists.

### Now We are Coming to Madras

After Ayodidass and Narasu's visit to Ceylon, and had taken refuge with Nayake Thero Somananda (he died in Sri Lanka in 1983), he probably returned with them to India and became in charge of the SIBA. In due time he purchased a land at **Egmore**-Madras which became the proper Maha Bodhi Society which functions solely, till today, for the people of Srilanka, traveling to India on their pilgrimage.

- Now, the last puzzle is how to travel from Madras to Ceylon in those times.

Well, there is 'an island' linked to "The Island"= MANNAR. Certainly, I know about the island by name, but what I couldn't know is, that between 1914 till even 1964, that there at the Palk Strait, was a ferry link and a bridge taking a train to cross.

SEEING ALL THOSE MANY LITTLE SHOALS ONE MIGHT EVEN WALK ON WATER TO THE OTHER SHORE.



Well, besides this trip to Perambur, there was another trip, a little bit sentimental. As I mentioned, my first trip to Madras was about twenty years past (actually I had made that trip only because my Ven. teacher mentioned, that once he visited Madras). At that time I took the chance to see famous Mahabalipuram. So, let's go one more time. But, alas, what a disappointing change! Imagine, one even had to pay a fee just to enter the town. No more free access to the shore, which also means to the Shore Temples. And then another Entry fee of 500IRs. With me was standing at the gate, pondering what to do, a lady from France. Well, we had no choice, knowing that there would be not another time. I owe her my photos she kindly took.

But while driving and walking through the streets, somewhat I couldn't believe my eyes! If anyone is looking for extraordinary

elegant, for the utmost beautiful carved Buddha statues, of black marble, one has to go to Mahabalipuram!!! I have never seen them elsewhere!! I could have remained standing there, I just couldn't take my eyes off. Continuing our way back we passed the Vivekananda Ashram. Unfortunately it was closed.



Stores at Mahabalipuram displaying on the sidewalk their extraordinary marble carved Buddha statues

Driving further back, I knew from the city map that we could pass through Adyar, an exciting idea, because I wanted to stop at the famous Theosophical Society, founded by Col. Olcott. What a beautiful scenery, located in a beautiful Allee-Avenue, with shade-giving trees. I never imagined that the land property would be that vast - huge trees, lots of space, very impressive. In

front of the Library was standing a bust a medium-size column of Olcott.

But the biggest amazing surprise I just discovered before leaving: another happening of being at the right place and the right time. On that day, as the poster sign showed, it was the day of the 110th death anniversary!

I wished I could have spent there a few days, so peaceful.



Entrance of the Theosophical Society in Adyar  
Madras, India





Bo- leaf from the Bodhi Tree of Holy Kelaniya Vihara,  
kept unbroken since 1987

## THE BUDDHIST THREESOME

*Who Dedicated Their Life's  
For The Buddhist Upliftmentf*



MARY M. FOSTER

21.9.1844 - 19.12.1930



SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

10.6.1832-24.03.1904



H. STEEL OLCOTT

2.8.1832 - 17.2.1907

Each of these three **foreign personalities** are in their own right honored and remembered.

As we read throughout the book Mary Mikahala Foster was of royal descendant and was a close friend of Queen Lili'uokalani. (The monarchy was overthrown in the 1890s). Her sister Victoria married a young man, C.P. Ward, from Kentucky. Today the name 'Ward' can be found anywhere like Ward Center, Ward Avenue.

But it was Mary Mikahala Foster, who developed an interest in the Theosophical Society.

But it was upon meeting Anagarika Dharmapala when he arrived in Honolulu as a stopover to return to Ceylon – Lanka, that her life changed to embrace Buddhism.

While studying all the documents and papers I found it very interesting that both their birthdays were in September and only a few days apart.

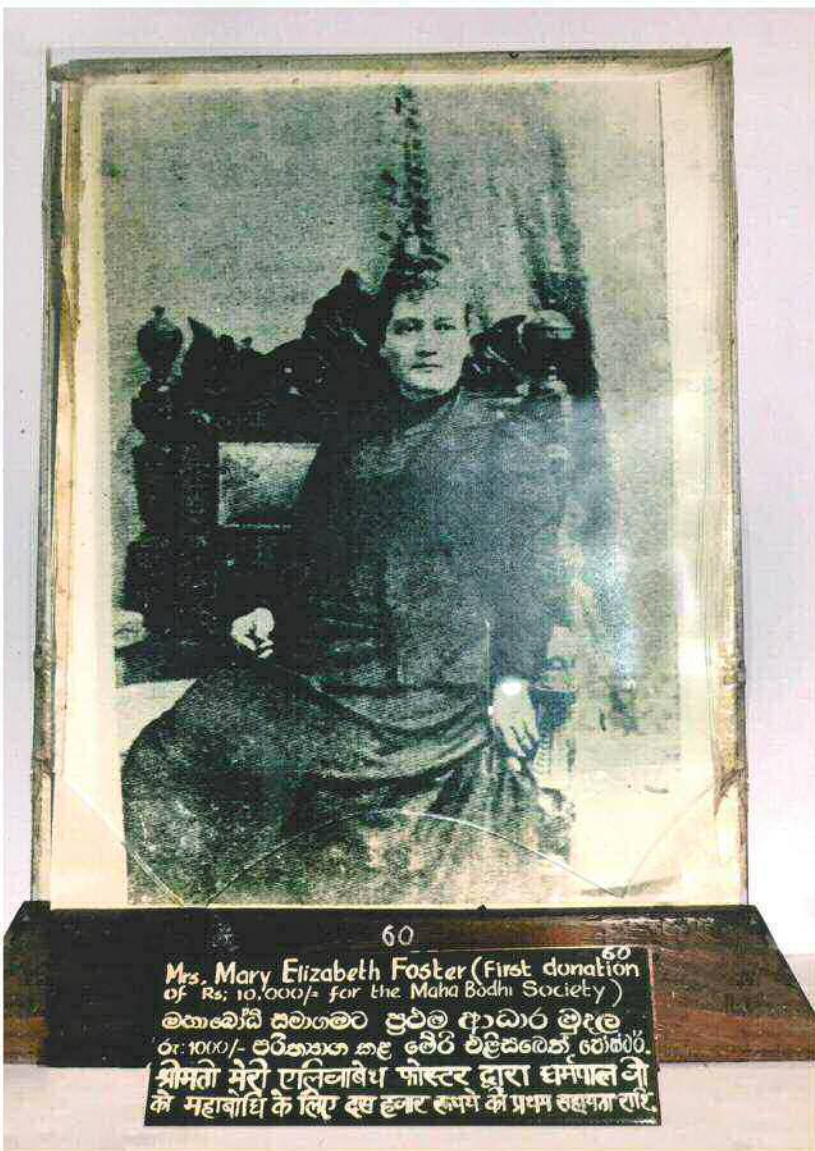
*And the famous Hawai'ian Musician*

*Robert Cazimero*

*composed this song for her:*

***BEAUTIFUL KAHANA***

*'This is the home of the lady  
of the loving heart of India'*



60

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Foster (First donation<sup>60</sup>  
of Rs. 10,000/- for the Maha Bodhi Society)

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଦାନୀ ଭାବେ  
ରୁ. 10000/- ପରିଷଦ କଣ୍ଠ ଦେଇଥିବା ପ୍ରଥମ ଦାନୀ

श्रीमती मेरी एलिजाबेथ फोस्टर द्वारा धर्मपाल जी  
के महाबाधि के लिए दस हजार रुपये की प्रथम सहयता राशि



### **Iyothee Thass**

Born 20 May 1845

Nilgiris district

Nationality British Indian

Other names Kathavarayan

Occupation Siddha physician

Known for South Indian Sakya Buddhist Movement

C. Iyothee Thass (20 May 1845 – 1914) was a prominent Tamil Activist and anti-caste activist and a practitioner of Siddha medicine. He famously converted to Buddhism and called upon the Paraiyars to do the same, arguing that this was their original religion. He also founded the Punchmar Mahajana Sabha in 1891 along with Rettaimalai Srinivasan. Punchamas are the one who does not come under Varna system. They are called as Avarnas.

#### **Early life**

Iyothee Thass possessed deep knowledge in Tamizh, Siddha medicine and philosophy, and literary knowledge in languages such as English, Sanskrit and Pali. Iyothee Thass was born Kathavarayan on 20 May 1845[2] in Chennai's Thousand lights area, and later migrated to Nilgiris district

#### **Leadership**

In 1886, Thass issued a revolutionary declaration that Scheduled caste people's were not Hindus. Following this declaration, he established the Dravida Mahajana Sabha in 1891. During the 1891 census, he urged Scheduled caste people to register themselves as "casteless Dravidians" instead of identifying themselves as Hindus. His activities were inspiration to Sri Lanka's Buddhist revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala.

#### **Conversion to Buddhism**

Iyothee Thass met Colonel H. S. Olcott with his followers and expressed a sincere desire to convert to Buddhism. According to Thass, the Paraiyars of Tamilakam were originally Buddhists and owned the land which had later been robbed from them by Aryan invaders.<sup>9–10</sup> With Olcott's help, Thass was able to visit Ceylon and obtain diksha from the Sinhalese Buddhist monk Bikkhu Sumangala Nayake. On returning, Thass established the Sakya Buddhist Society in Madras with branches all over South India. The Sakya Buddhist Society was also known as the Indian Buddhist Association and was established in the year 1898.

Iyothee Thass died in 1914 at the age of 69

## EDWIN ARNOLD



He was born in Kent, England. His early schooling has been at Kings College London and at the University College in Oxford.

At the young age of twenty in 1857, he won the Newdigate Prize for his poem Belshazzar's Feast.

In 1856 he accepted a post in India as Principal of the government Sanskrit College at Poona, arriving a year later and returned to England in 1863.

He started work as a journalist at the Daily Telegraph. In the meantime he had studied the languages of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

While becoming editor-in-chief, his talent in poetry developed profoundly. His to-become opus 'The Light of Asia' was published in 1879 and immediately became famous. It gives testimony of his affinity of India.

By the time of 1884, his opus made its way of recognition to Siam, Burma and Ceylon and certainly to India, upon he received an invitation to visit the East.

Finally, in 1885 he returned to India to Bodh Gaya.

Although the Temple Vihara underwent several renovations and lastly taken up by the Burmese King Mindon-Min in

1874 subsequently completed in 1884 under Sir Alexander Cunningham. Yet after centuries it was still occupied by Hindu Mahants. He was very sad to see how the Saivite Priest managed the property.

Thereupon he asked that he would like to pick some leaves from the Bodhi Tree. His blunt reply was 'take as much you like its naught to us'.

Consequently, Arnold sent urgent appeals to the Indian and British Government as well as to Asian Buddhist Countries.

It was his, this FIRST DEMAND of restoring (return) the Vihara back into Buddhist Custodians, that worldwide attention was given to the situation of Bodh Gaya.

It seems that in the same year he crossed the ocean to Ceylon, to Panadura as his first spot. There he made his acquaintance with David Hewavitarane a wealthy young man of Colombo, later to be known as Anagarika Dharmapala. As some sources mentions, Col. Olcott arrived in Ceylon in 1880. So they must have met too, either in Panadura or Colombo. Both Arnold and Olcott must have obtained some information about the Panadura Debate, but had taken place already in 1873. As we see Olcott arrived already in 1880 in Ceylon whereas Arnold arrived 5 years later in 1885.

Sir Arnold received an enthusiastic reception, especially from the great Mahanayaka Thero Weligama Sri Sumangala and had the chance of being granted a long interview. Again he urged that a request need to be done to restore the Vihara into the hand of a Committee of Buddhist Nations. Requested to bring his suggestion to the authorities, he at once contacted the Governor of Ceylon, the Governor of Madras (Tamil Nadu) and Calcutta (West Bengal).

Obviously, the three Olcott, Arnold and Hewavitharana met and consequently led the foundation of the Maha Bodhi Society in Colombo in January 1891. The founding members have been Ven. Sumangala Thero as President, Col. Olcott as Director and as General Secretary Hewavitharane/ Dharmapala. In May the Maha Bodhi Society Bodh Gaya, with Arnold as one of the founding members, has been also established. Subsequently a Maha Bodhi Society branch Calcutta was founded in 1892.

In Sarnath as the original Mulagandakuti Temple had collapsed and was ruins, in 1930/31 a modern building was built by the Maha Bodhi Society, with the donation of Mary Mikahala Foster.

#### A GOLDEN CHETIYA

Arnold's last place to see was Kandy, the hill capital of Ceylon. He was received with great honor by the Mahanayake and Nayake Thero of the Dalada Maligawa Temple. He presented to them the Bodhi leaf from Bodh Gaya, which was received with great emotion.

The leaf was placed in a casket of gold and made the center of a weekly puja. As a special honor in return he was gifted with a begging bowl and a yellow robe.

After returning to London in 1891 he continued to be active in the cause of Bodh Gaya, even on his visit to Japan with his convincing plea.

A powerful article in the Daily Telegraph was also republished in the Journal of the Maha Bodhi Society.



## CONTINUOUS TROUBLES

After Hewavitharana adopted the life as an Anagarika with the name Dharmapala, he totally gave his life to the cause of Bodh Gaya and one can only imagine the great hardship he had to bear with the Mahant.

The dispute on several matters continued when finally in 1953 in the final settlement the order came to an end.

The Buddhist today are in great debt to this fine gentlemen.

## HENRY STEEL OLCOTT



From the time of the Portuguese invasion in 1505 until 1880, the foreign domination had wiped out much of the indigenous culture in Ceylon and Buddhism itself was on a low ebb. Only a few Buddhist schools against eight-hundreds missionary schools around the island existed.

If not for the arrival of Col. Olcott in 1880, Buddhism might have waned off.

Col. Olcott was a journalist and lawyer, born in Orange, New Jersey. He attended the college of the city of New York. After he had served the US Army, he was promoted to the rank of a Colonel.

In 1874 he met Helena Blavatsky, who just arrived in New York in 1873. It was through her that he had developed interest in spiritual philosophy.

In 1878 they left New York and embarked on India. As I assumed correctly the arrival port in India has been Bombay. After more than one hour searching on the internet, Google books showed "Old Diary Leaves The Only Authentic History" by H. Olcott, some pages were available to read.

On the way to the south, they had been invited by the Maharajah, Sir J.M. Tegoda of Calcutta.

They also had been invited by Sir. M. Row's to their residence in Mylapore, a residential part of the city of Madras (today Chennai). With engagements, receptions and lectures crowded candidates wishing into membership thus on 26-04-1882 after the ceremony the Madras Theosophical Society came in to being. A beautiful great piece of land was purchased in Adyar-Madras for the Society.

As to their ears had also reached the event of the Panadura debate they decided to sail to Ceylon, where they arrived in May 1880.

Both H.V and H.O. made their first visit at the Wijayananda Temple at Galle. They observed the 'five precepts' from the chief incumbent, the Ven. A. Dharmavamsa Thero. And with reciting the Triple Gem, they became Buddhist followers and he dedicated himself totally to the Buddhist cause.

As a matter of fact, it was Sir Arnold who had organized his reception upon arrival in Colombo.

He also had sponsored A. Dharmapala to be able to attend the first World Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893 and sponsored as well the foundation of the Maha Bodhi Society in Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Madras.

His promotion and excellent skills and with the help of the Mahatheros all over the country, Buddhist schools have been established.



Just to name a few, like Ananda College, Nalanda College, Mahinda College, and one in Kandy, the Dharmaraja College, where his statue is standing near the Auditorium. He was indeed a remarkable gentleman. Thus he is honored with a

street name 'Ollcott Mawatha' in Colombo.



His contribution to the re-awakening of Buddhism and the promotion of Buddhist schools has been undoubtedly the great service he has done for the people in Ceylon-Lanka.

Col. Olcotts' Society in Adyar became a great success with his Research Center Institute, a Library with rare collections and publications of distinguished scholars.

Even today, which means 2017/18 many people are drawn to stop for a visit like myself in 2017 on the way from Mahabalipuram. Mahamallapuram back to Chennai, where I had spent the month of February.

His 110<sup>th</sup> death anniversary would be in February 17, 2017 and certainly well celebrated in Adyar.

For more details about Adyar Chennai please read '**Searching trip to Chennai**'

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

It has been the most amazing journey, in both ways. Living and traveling between Hawaii and Sri Lanka and even to India, partly in the case of Mary Mikahala Foster. Sri Lanka provided in great detail all about the strenuous adventure of Anagarika Dharmapala.

Their exceptional relationship is outstanding in history I would say. After my first participating in the Mary Foster festival, I had the idea to invite a Venerable from the Maha Bodhi Society India for 2007. Unfortunately, due to his tight schedule, he was not able to participate. Further attempts have not been pursued until now.

Now, since returning to Hawaii in January 2019, certainly without any doubt, I would establish the Maha Bodhi Hawaii Society.

The first Maha Bodhi Hawaii celebration for Mary Foster to pay tribute will be jointly conducted with the Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Temple on December 15<sup>th</sup>, expecting as a guest the president of the Maha Bodhi Sri Lanka branch, Ven. Upatissa Nayake Thero and hopefully Mr. Yapa, my publisher.

We are looking forward to many more annual celebrations to come with distinguished guests from Sri Lanka and/or India.

Gram : 'MAHABODHI' Sarnath

॥ NAMO BUDDHAYA ॥

Tel : 0091-542-2585595 / 2588678  
Fax : 0091-542-2588678 / 2588380  
Email : mbs@sarnath.org / info@bbsi.in  
mbs@sarnath @rediffmail.com**MAHA BODHI SOCIETY OF INDIA**

(The Pioneer International Buddhist Organisation, Estab - 1891)

**Sarnath - The Birth Place of Buddhism**Address : MULAGANDHA KUTY VIHARA, ISIPATANA, DEER-PARK, DHARMAPALA ROAD, SARNATH, VARANASI-7, (U.P.) INDIA  
November 27, 2007To,  
**Venerable Ayya M. Vimala**  
Lanka Vihara Hawaii  
2428 Tusitala St. # 202  
Honolulu, HI 96815  
USA**Dear Bhikkhuni,**I am pleased to receive the invitation card for Mary Foster Birthday Festival held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007 at Hawaii in USA along with your letter.

But I am sorry to inform your good self that I received your letter with invitation very late and regret to be not there on this worthy occasion. As we all know that it was Mother Mary Foster from Honolulu, who came forward first with Anagarika Dharmapala-the founder of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, and donated Ten thousand rupees for construction of the Mulagandha Kuty Vihara, now a world famous prime place of Buddhist worship world over for all the Buddhist devotees. Also only because of her monetary and moral support Anagarika Dharmapala could stand to his determination and bring such grandeur Vihara.

Therefore, I am very much happy to know that devotees from Honolulu, Hawaii came forward to commemorate the birth anniversary celebration of Mother Mary Foster that could be a real tribute to her and her contribution to the Buddhist world. Further, please let me know earlier such grand celebration for next year so that I may participate on the occasion in time.

Herewith, I am sending 'History of Mulagandha Kuty Vihara' book written by me in which information on the contribution of Mother Mary Foster is narrated. However, I convey my sincere thanks to you for sending the information. With this I pray from the Mulagandha Kuty Vihara, Sarnath-the place where Sakyauni Buddha preached his first Sermon that may you be in good health and happiness by the blessings of noble Triple Gem.

Thanking You.

'Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam'

Yours in the Dhamma

**Ven. K. Siri Sumedha Thero**  
Assistant General Secretary  
Maha Bodhi Society of India  
High Priest-Mulagandha Kuty Vihara,  
Sarnath, Varanasi

**HEADQUARTER** : 4-A, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Kolkata - 700073 (W.B.) India  
**CENTRES** : Buddha Gaya, Sriravasti, Sanchi, Bhuwaneswar, Lucknow, New Delhi, Chennai (Madras), Bangalore, Ajmer, Mumbai, Nowgarh, Allahabad, England, America, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, China and Ghana.  
**PUBLICATIONS** : *The Maha Bodhi* : English quarterly (Kolkata), *Dharmadoot* : English and Hindi half yearly (Sarnath), *Sambodhi* : Hindi and English half yearly (Buddha Gaya), *Kalinga* : English and Hindi half yearly (Bhuwaneswar).

## NOTES

### Further Readings...

- BPS – Collected Bodhi Leaves – Vol. I (BL22) on MMF
- BPS – Wheel No. 70-72 – Anagarika Dharmapala – A Biographical Sketch by Bhikkhu Sangarakshitha.
- The Lion's Roar: Anagarika Dharmapala by Sarath Amunugam, Vijita Yapa Publisher
- BPS – Wheel Publication No. 159-161 – Edwin Arnold – Brief Account of his life by William Peiris.
- My Life Story – Anagarika Dharmapala's life in his own words – by Laxshman Jayawardana – Sarasavi Publishers, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka.
- Great Buddhist of the Twentieth Century by Sangarakshitha, Windhores publications.
- Introduction: about W.K. Jayasekara.
- Arnold Edwin, Sir, The Light of Asia.
- Guruge, Ananda, Anagarika Dharmapala.

## **APPRECIATION**

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the kind and ever ready time and ideas for formatting manuscripts, editing photos and listen to my stories which goes to Nalin Ariyaratne.

The new cover was designed by Kaveen, photos Provided by the author.



## APPENDIX

### HONPA HONGWANJI BETSUIN

#### THE JAPANESE TEMPLE ON PALI HIGHWAY



One exceptional Temple just celebrated its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary: the Japanese Temple **HONPA HONGWANJI** with its white dome, resembling a chetiya like in Sri Lanka, shining from far by sunshine.

The main Temple in Japan is the famous Higashi Hongwanji in Kyoto.

The land on which the Temple was build was a donation by Mary Mikahala Foster, who became very devoted to Buddhism although of Royal Hawaiian descent. See my book 'SUDU AMMA' M.M. Foster, Hawaiian Bodhisattva, published by Mahabodhi Society of Sri Lanka

The first immigrants came in 1885 likewise as workers on sugar cane and pineapple plantations. Soon a group came together who were followers of the JODO SHINSHU/PURE LAND school (founded by HONEN 1133-1212) laying the foundation of the today many Temples around the island.

The shrine is decorated with a very beautiful AMIDA statue, which is about 500 years old and carved out of Japanese



wood. The main celebration is Bodhi Day, lectures are offered in Japanese and English, however New Year goes with the old tradition, a cup of sake (rice wine) and mochi, which is rice-pounding.

## About the Author



Ayya Mie Vimala (Yogini, Mystosoph and Poet) was born in 1943 in Koenigsberg, East-Prussia (the city of the German philosopher E. Kant). The first time she did hear the word “Buddha” was when she was only nineteen. Then in course of time her first direct connection and practice were with Japanese Soto-Zen in 1968. But in December 1983, on a visit to Sri Lanka, she became a follower of Theravada Buddhism under the late German scholar-monk, Ven. Nyanaponika Mahathero and became his disciple, continuously visiting Kandy at his Hermitage to deepen her Dhamma study. She received Anagarika precepts and in 1992 Samaneri precepts at the Thumpane Temple, Malwathu Maha Viharaya.

She spent a period of time abroad at Palma de Mallorca in Spain, Los Angeles, USA, and Mt. Hiei, Kyoto, Japan. Since 1996 she regularly visited the winter season’s in Honolulu Hawai’i. Since 2001 she became a Board Member of the Hawai’i Association of International Buddhists, Honolulu.

She is affiliated with the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka and is a Life-Member of the Maha Bodhi Society, Colombo, Sri Lanka. After almost twenty years in Hawaii, with some breaks and recently of 5 years in Kandy for her study and writing, she returned in January 2019.

Short after, she established the Maha Bodhi Society of Hawaii with the aim to honor in gratitude Mary Foster, the great philanthropist of Hawaii with an annual celebration.

By the same author: Marananussati: Contemplation of Death in Buddhist Literature, Meditation & Living Experience





