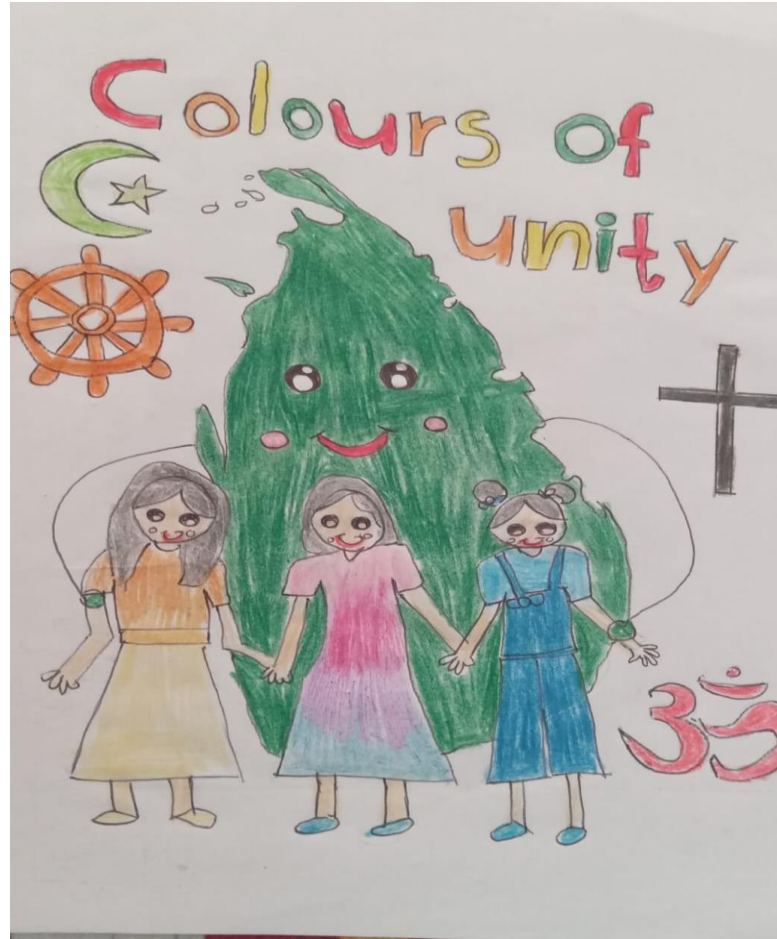


Colors of Unity



Tharuki Hesara Meegahagedara

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By

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|

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**This Research book is Dedicated to my Alma Mater
Mother Maya.....**

Foreword

In an increasingly complex global future, the "Hemamala Upahara" book project, led by Mahamaya Girls' College, stands as a turning point in girls' education. Over a decade, it has successfully nurtured thousands of children to become young authors.

This year, by collaborating with other schools, we aimed to provide students with a wealth of new experiences. The goal was to develop multi-faceted skills, including communication, values, and creative growth. As a result, children have written books that pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic—the supreme symbol of the Buddhist world—to the Hill Country (Kandy).

I extend my gratitude to everyone involved, including the students who contributed their creativity and the teachers who guided them.

Shashikala Senadhira

Principal

Mahamaya Girls' College

Congratulatory Message

It is a great honor for me, as the Governor of the Central Province, to send a congratulatory message for the launch of the books created through the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project initiated by Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy.

Education is the fundamental foundation for the progress of society, and it is further strengthened through books and literary creations. It is clearly commendable that students' talents, creativity, and intellectual abilities are emerging through projects such as this.

I believe that this book creation project will provide valuable knowledge and a precious literary contribution not only to the students but to the entire society. Furthermore, I hope that through such efforts, future writers who will bring pride to Sri Lanka will emerge.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation and blessings to the Principal, the academic staff, the students, and everyone involved who dedicated themselves to this successful endeavor. I wish this project and the book launch ceremony great success.

Sarath B.S. Abeykoon

Governor, Central Province

Emeritus Professor, University of Peradeniya

2026-05-10

Congratulatory Message

I highly appreciate the noble and outstanding effort of the Principal and the academic staff of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, the student daughters, the students of other participating schools, and everyone who dedicated themselves to plan and implement this book publication project. The project was organized under the leadership of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, with the participation of other schools in the Kandy Zone, with the aim of encouraging children toward book creation within the current school system, as a tribute to Hemamala Kumariya who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic to Sri Lanka.

For several decades, Sri Lanka has been committed to providing free, compulsory, quality, and equitable education to all children, thereby producing a future generation of intelligent and skilled citizens. In such a context, this book creation program for school children helps develop creative ability, critical thinking, and other positive qualities for a balanced and well-rounded personality, and contributes to building a future knowledge-based society.

May all activities of the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project be successful through the blessings of the Sacred Tooth Relic.

Pradeep Nilanga Dela
Diyawadana Nilame,
Sri Dalada Maligawa.
2026.05.10.

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Introduction

A Guide to traditional Festivals of Srilanka

Srilanka is a wonderful island where people of different faith and ethnicity exist together in harmony. We have a lot of festivals that bring families and neighbors closer to each other. As a Buddhist girl, I like celebrating cultural activities of other communities too. It is really interesting and I have really enjoyed it. That's why I choose this topic because I would like to share my personal experience with all of you. I believe that will also be an added advantage for the readers of this book to gain more knowledge and understanding. This research book shows traditional Festivals such as

- **The Sinhala and Tamil New Year**
- **Wesak**
- **Poson**
- **Deepavali**
- **Thaipongal**
- **Mahashivarathri**
- **Ramazan**
- **Hadji**
- **Christmas**

The spirit of Celebration Festivals in our country are not just about holidays. They show about cultural values.

Spiritual: people visit their religious places to find calm and peace

Unity : People share food and gifts

Gratitude: As human beings we have to be thankful to the surroundings, environment and valuable things in their lives.



The Sinhala & Tamil New Year

The Spirit of the Festival

In Sri Lanka, festivals mean not only a day of fun, but also represent values that matter:

- Unity. Here, everyone shares meals and gifts each other.
- Thankfulness: The farmers express their gratitude to nature for the successful crop yield
- Faith: People in this community visit temples and kovils to perform their prayers and to seek relief and peace. They

What is Aluth Avurudda The Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebration occurs in mid-April. It concludes the agricultural season. This festival is very important because it is a joint celebration of both the Sinhalese Buddhists and the Tamil Hindus. This festival marks the entry of the sun into the house of Aries.

The Sinhala and Tamil New Year Rituals

The Sinhala and Tamil New Year is a special occasion in Sri Lanka. Some of the fun and important rituals that people do, are the following:

Special Times are Important

Every single one of us follows these special times, even the kings and queens from those days.

Lighting the Fire

Mothers heat up a new clay pot over a fire in order to boil milk. When the milk overflows, that is considered lucky!

Eating Together

The whole family has meals together at the same time. This is a special occasion when the whole family gets together. Good Health Wish Elders apply herbal oil to the heads of children so as to wish them good health.



The New Year is not complete without special sweets and treats:

Kiribath

It consists of rice and coconut milk.

Kiripan

It is a mixture

Kavum

sweet oilcake with 'top knot'

Kokis

It resembles a flower. It is rice flour that is fried. It is very crispy. Games & Fun When you hear "Coo-hoo, the arrival of the New Year approaches. - Children play games like Pillow Fights (Kotta Pora) - Girls sing songs (Onchili Waran) while swinging on decorated swings - Everyone has a great time with family and friends! It resembles a flower. It is rice flour that is fried. It is very crispy. Games & Fun When you hear "Coo-hoo, the arrival of the New Year approaches. - Children play games like Pillow Fights (Kotta Pora) - Girls sing songs (Onchili Waran) while swinging on decorated swings - Everyone has a great time with family and friends!



Vesak

The Festival of Light and Wisdom

Vesak is the most important day for the Buddhists. It falls on the full moon day in May, called Vesak Poya. It remembers three things: Birth of Prince Siddhartha. His Enlightenment, where he became the Buddha. His Passing (Parinibbana).

Lanterns, Pandols and Dansal
Vesak Lanterns: They represent the light of the Buddha's teachings. Pandols (Thorana): Giant structures bearing light bulbs running into several thousands of pieces, narrating stories about the Buddha's previous birth. Dansal: Free food stalls where people give away to strangers ice cream, rice, or drinks to practice "Giving" (Dana).

Poson – The Arrival of Wisdom

Poson Poya Day is usually in June. This is the second major holiday for Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Vesak is the major holiday.

What is Poson?

Poson Full Moon Festival is a celebration of the arrival of Buddhism in the country of Sri Lanka. It happened over 2,000 years ago, and a Buddhist monk named Arahat Mahinda (the son of the Indian Emperor Ashoka) visited this country from India. King Devanampiyatissa of Sri Lanka met this monk on a mountain named Mihintale. King Devanampiyatissa was out hunting an deer when he heard the teachings of the great Buddha and stopped his hunts and took up the philosophy of non-violence and loving kindness. This act of the great king changed the course of the history of Sri Lanka for good!

How We Celebrate Poson

Mihintale : Thousands of devotees, attired in whites, ascend the 1,840 steps of the Mihintale rock. They come to pray and pay tribute to the meeting of the King and Arahat Mahinda.

White Clothes (Sil) : Many people go to the temple to meditate and listen to "Dhamma" (Buddha's teachings). They all wear white clothes symbolizing that all are equal and pure.

Poson Lanterns : Similar to Vesak, people create beautiful lanterns. But sometimes, the lanterns for Poson are white, blue, to express peace.

Pandols (Thorana): Large, glowing panels are erected in cities. They depict images and describe the story of the arrival of Arahat Mahinda in Sri Lanka.

Dansal: Kind people arrange stalls to distribute free food, herbal tea, or ice cream to devotees or travelers. The purpose behind this practice is to develop the habit of giving.

Bhakthi Gee Songs are sung by children and adults gathered on decorated stages or trucks with beautiful and peaceful songs about the Buddha.

Deepavali – The Victory of Light

"Deepavali" or "Diwali" is known as the "Festival of Lights" for the Hindus. This festival takes place in October or November every year. It is an occasion to celebrate the victory of "Good over Evil and Light over Darkness." It is a reminder that "knowledge is greater than ignorance."

Lamps and Kolam Designs

Diyas: Lit clay lamps to the Goddess Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth) inside.

Kolam/Rangoli: Colorful designs drawn on the floor using colored rice flour or sand.

The Thai Pongal Festival

The Thai Pongal festival is an important event for Tamilians in Sri Lanka. It is an agricultural festival and is celebrated in honor of Surya, the sun god, to express gratitude for his energy for a successful agricultural output.

Thai Pongal:

The Festival of GratitudeThe Thai Pongal festival generally takes place on either the 14th or 15th of January. It symbolizes the beginning of the Tamil month known as "Thai." Unlike other festivals, Thai Pongal is more than a religious celebration because it is actually a means of expressing "Thank You" to nature, to the sun, and even to farm animals.

1. Preparing the Home

A few days before the festival, families thoroughly clean their houses. Painting their houses or putting up curtains is a common practice during this period. Finally, at the entrance of their house, women prepare beautiful and colored designs in rice flour known as Kolam. This activity is practiced in order to allow prosperity and good luck inside the house.

2. Preparation of Sweet Pongal

"The most interesting part of the day is at sunrise," Narine writes. A fresh vessel made out of clay is placed on a hearth consisting of three bricks in a spacious place that is exposed to the sun. The Meaning of "Pongal": The name "Pongal" has the following meaning: Pong The Ritual: As the milk in the pot starts boiling and spilling over, the family members cheerfully cry out, "Pongalo Pongal!" This spillage represents living with an abundance of food and joy. The Dish: Then, they add harvested rice, jaggery or sweet sap, cashews, and raisins to the milk to make this sweet food item

3. Offering to the Sun God

Once the Pongal has been prepared, the next thing is to serve the food on a banana leaf. As the food is served, the first thing the family does is offer the rice to the Sun God and sugarcane and ginger plants too. They then pray for the year to come out successfully and healthfully.

4. Thanking the Animals (Mattu Pong)

The next day of Thai Pongal is known as Mattu Pongal. This is a unique day as it is dedicated to the worship of the domesticated animals, specifically the cattle (cows and bulls). The farmer bathes the cattle, and then he paints their horns with brightly colored substances such as red, blue, and green. He also provides them with a necklace of flowers along with their favorite foods.

5. Unity and Visiting Relatives

During this festival, people wear new clothes and visit their relatives as well as friends. They exchange presents and have food to eat. It is a time when the entire community unites to live in happiness and harmony.

This time I celebrated Thai pongal with my mother. She prepared pongal rice it was very tasty. I am so glad I got this experience while I was writing this book .we went to kovila same day and watched Theru Procession too.

We went to the kovil, lit the lamp, and expressed our gratitude to God and nature for all that we have.



Mahashiwarathri

Maha Shivaratri

The Great Night of Lord Shiva While many festivals fall in the daytime, Maha Shivaratri is celebrated all night! It falls in February or March, depending. This is a holy night for Hindus, as it is the night dedicated to Lord Shiva, the god of meditation and protection.

1. The Story of the Blue Throat

Probably the most famous story connected with this night is called "Samudra Manthan" - Churning of the Ocean. A pot of deadly poison, which could destroy the world, is said to have come out of the ocean. In order to save everybody, Lord Shiva drank the poison Himself. His wife, Goddess Parvati, held his throat so the poison didn't go down into his body. The poison stayed in his throat and turned it blue! Because of this he is sometimes called Neelakantha-The Blue-Throated One.

2. Staying Awake (The Night Vigil)

Devotees also keep awake through the night to keep Lord Shiva awake and help him recover from the poison. This is called Vigil or Jaagaran. People sing devotional songs Bhajans and chant "Om Namah Shivaya ". It is believed that by remaining awake with a straight spine, individuals are able to experience a great burst of energy and peace.

3. The Rituals at the Temple

On this day, Hindus go to the temple and do a special ceremony called Abhishekam. Bathing the Lingam: Devotees bathe the Shiva Lingam- the symbol of Lord Shiva- with milk, honey, yogurt, and water. Bael Leaves: They provide leaves of the Bael tree, which happen to be with three leaflets. These signify the three eyes that Lord Shiva has or the three powers of creation, preservation, and destruction. Fasting: People abstain from food for 24 hours as a sign of self-discipline and commitment.

Major Shiva Temples in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, there are five ancient and renowned Shiva temples known as the Pancha Ishwarams.

Every year, thousands of devotees flock to these during the Maha Shivaratri celebrations:

- Naguleswaram (North - Jaffna)
- Ketheeswaram (Northwest- Mannar)
- Koneswaram (East – Trincomalee)
- Munneswaram (West -Chilaw)
- Tondeswaram (South –Mathara)

What does it teach us?

Mahashivaratri teaches us how to deal with the darkness and ignorance in our lives. It teaches us to remain calm, composed, and courageous, as Lord Shiva was.

Last year I remember when my mother and I went to the kovil, lit the lamp, offered water to Lord Shiva, and worshiped together.

Ramazan Festival

The Month of Fasting and Giving

The Muslim community in Sri Lanka celebrates the event of Ramazan (Eid-ul-Fitr) immensely. This marks the culmination of a month-long fasting period of 30 days. It is a day to pray, be charitable, and think about those who are less privileged.

1. The Month of Fasting

Before the main celebration, Muslims go without eating or drinking anything for an entire month. They do not consume anything from the time the sun rises until it sets.

Suhoor

The pre-dawn meal, usually eaten before sunrise.

Iftar: The evening meal eaten after breaking the fast as the sun sets. In Sri Lanka, dates and a health-giving porridge known as Kanji are eaten as iftar.

2. Why do they Fast?

Fasting—the act of going hungry—is much more. Fasting instills theSelf-Control: Achieving control of one's desires.

Empathy: Feeling what it is like to not have enough food to eat on a daily basis.

Patience: To wait for the proper time and be grateful for whatever we already possess.

3.The Sight of the New Moon

The festival of Eid-ul-Fitr kicks off only when the new crescent-shaped moon appears in the sky. Even if the moon appears, the very next day becomes a holiday! Friends greet each other wishing “Eid Mubarak,” which means “Blessed Festival.”

4. Charity

Zakat, or charity, for the poor is a very essential part of the month of Ramazan. Before setting out for the early morning prayer, each family contributes a specified sum or grain of food for distribution among the poor. It ensures that the poor too have the means to enjoy the day of Eid.

5.Eid Celebrations in Sri Lanka

Special Prayers: The morning sees the men and children going to the mosque or open fields for a special community prayer.

New Clothes: Everyone wears their new clothes. Women usually apply Mehendi or Henna designs on their hands.

The Feast: Families also prepare yummy dishes such as Biryani, Watalappam (a sweet coconut custard pudding), and other snacks to be shared with their neighbors of other religions.

What does it all mean?

Ramazan teaches us to be disciplined and generous. It also teaches us to share what we have with other people and to be thankful for what we have on our plates.

The Hadji Festival – A Journey of Faith

The Hadji Festival, also known as the Eid-ul-Adha, is the second big festival observed among Muslims all over the world, including the people of Sri Lanka. It is commonly known as the "Festival of Sacrifice." It is observed during the 12th month of the Muslim calendar, which is known as Dhul Hijah.

1. The Meaning of Hajj

The “Hajj” is the sacred journey to the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. A Pillar of Islam: Performing the Hajj journey is considered one of the Pillars of Islam. It is mandatory for every Muslim who is fit and has the financial capability to undertake the journey at least once in his or her lifetime. Unity: In Hajj, millions of people belonging to every nation, tribe, and kind wear white garments and pray in unison. It indicates equality among all individuals.

2. The Story of Prophet Ibrahim

The festival commemorates the story of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham).

He was asked to sacrifice his son, Ismail, by God as an examination of his faith.

Since Ibrahim was so devoted to his God, he freely agreed to this plan. Just at the very last minute, God recognized how devoted he really was, and he substituted a ram, a male sheep, for his son. We can learn about obedience, trust, and sacrifice from this story.

3. How it is Celebrated in Sri Lanka

Although not all Muslims are able to perform the Hajj to Mecca, the spirit of the Hajj celebration reaches Sri Lankan Muslims:

Morning Prayers: Families rise early, dress up in new clothes, and head to either a mosque or an open place like Galle Face Green in Colombo for prayers.

The Act of Sacrifice (Qurbani): To commemorate the story of Ibrahim, those who can afford to sacrifice a goat or a cow.

The Rule of Three: The flesh gotten from the sacrifice is portioned into three equal shares:

- One part for the Family.
- One part for Friends and Relatives.
- One part for the Poor and Needy.

4. Traditional Food

The Hadji Festival is one for delicious feasts in Sri Lanka. Biryani's rich ingredients (rice mixed with meat and spices) are the stars of the table.

Muscat & Watalappam: Desserts are shared with one's guests.

Sharing with Neighbors: A serene tradition is followed in Sri Lanka where the Muslim families send plates of Biryani and sweets to the Sinhalese and Tamil neighbors..

My mother and I visit her childhood friend, a Muslim friend she knew from school. We celebrate together, and her friend, whom we affectionately call aunty Fazna treats us to delicious biryani and watalappam. The food is always mouthwatering.

What does it teach us?

The Hadji Festival teaches us to give up something we love for the sake of others and to always look after the poor. It's a festival of generosity and humanity. 10

Christmas

A Season of Joy and Peace"

December, with its winterIn Sri Lanka, Christmas is observed on the 25th of December every year. This is a very colorful and joyous occasion as it commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. Although it is a Christian holiday, people of all religions in Sri Lanka celebrate this occasion.

1. The Meaning of Christmas

For Christians, Jesus is known as the “Light of the World.” His birth signifies the coming of peace on earth and the presence of goodwill towards all people. This is an occasion to focus on the significance of love, forgiveness, and kindness.

Preparations and Decorations

The "Christmas spirit" kicks off weeks before December in Sri Lanka:

The Christmas Tree: Families decorate a pine tree, or a plastic one, with bright lights, shiny baubles, and tinsel. A big star is generally placed at the top for the Star of Bethlehem.

The Crib (Nativity Scene): Many homes and churches set up a "Crib". This is a small model of the stable where Jesus was born, featuring figures of Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, and the animals.

The Christmas Star: In Sri Lanka, you will see big, handmade paper stars with lights inside hanging in front of houses and shops.

3. Christmas Traditions

Midnight Mass: People, on this day, that is Christmas Eve (December 24th), wear their finest clothes and attend Church services at midnight. They sing Carols-religious songs-and pray for the salvation of the world.Santa Claus: Children believe that Father Christmas, or better known as Santa Claus, goes around the world giving gifts to only those who behaved well during the year.

Firecrackers: Just like in the New Year, Sri Lankans love to light firecrackers at midnight to welcome Christmas Day!

4. Sri Lankan Christmas Treats:

Food plays an enormous role in the celebrations. Sri Lanka has its own specialties during Christmas:

Christmas Cake: It is a dark fruit cake containing spices, honey, and dried fruits. Sometimes it is also coated with marzipan (almond paste).

Breudher: It's a specific type of butter cake that's of Dutch origin and quite popular in Sri Lanka, especially consumed with cheese or plantain.Love Cake. A sweet and moist cake comprising of semolina, cashews, and honey.

5. The Spirit of Giving

Christmas is widely known as “The Season of Giving.”**Sharing:** They go and visit their neighbors and friends in order to share cakes and other gifts with them.

Helping Others: Many individuals choose to visit orphanages or elder’s homes to distribute meals and clothing to the lonely or needy.

What does it teach us?

- Christmas teaches us to find hope in small starts. Christmas asks us to remember to be generous and to bring light into other people’s lives through what we say and what we do.
- "For Christmas, we'd decorate a tree, bake cookies and cakes, and attend church to light candles and offer roses. Sharing gifts with my mom was always the highlight.

One island many colours

we see that Sri Lanka is a very special place. Throughout the year, our air is filled with different sounds: the rhythm of the Avurudu drums, the peaceful chanting of Vesak, the bells of the Kovils, the calls to prayer from the Mosques, and the joyful Christmas carols.

What have we learned?

We have learned that, although we celebrate it all differently, there is the same important things cherished:

Family: All festivals bring families together-eating, laughing, and praying.

Sharing: Whether it be a plate of Kavum, a cup of Vesak drink, or a plate of Biryani, we especially love to share it with our neighbors.

Nature: The festivals teach us to respect the sun, the rain, and the moon, and the animals that help us. Light-most celebrations use lamps and candles to depict that goodness and knowledge will always triumph over darkness.



The Future is in Our Hands

- As a student, we are the future of Sri Lanka. While you know the festivals celebrated by your friends, you are helping our country to live in peace. A festival is not only a holiday. A festival gives us an opportunity to be a better person by treating a stranger better.
- So, let's celebrate our differences and cherish the fact that we are united." Whether or not it is the festival that we are observing today, the message remains the same: "May all beings be happy and peaceful."

Colours of Unity

Tharuki Hesara Meegahagedara
Grade 9 B
Mahamaya Girls College Kandy



Afterword

With the approval of the Ministry of Education, this research-based project has empowered thousands of student authors for over ten years. Educationists recognize it as a program that significantly enhances the quality of school education.

In alignment with modern educational reforms, encouraging students to author a research work is a milestone in this journey. In this digital age of "Smart" technology, the modern school must demonstrate through research that books and technology should be used together. This is because the unique joy a child receives from a book cannot be replaced by anything else.

To prevent children from drifting away from books—which remain our primary educational tool and storehouse of human knowledge—Mahamaya Girls' College has spearheaded the "Hemamala Upahara" project for many years. Its primary objectives are to foster academic discipline, promote values, and pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who fulfilled a historic mission to empower women.

We express our gratitude to the Principal, teachers, parents, alumni of Mahamaya Girls' College, representatives of other schools, the Diyawadana Nilame, and the staff of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) for their support.

Seneviratne Mahalekam

(Project Creator)