

The midnight gala of the missing shoes



Ranumi Sehansa Dissanayake

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Author's other publications

- ❖ First publication - සිඟිතිගේ ලේන් කුඩුව - 2019
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Dedication

To my family, for
giving me my first
stories, and to my
teachers, for giving
me the tools to
write my own.



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

The midnight gala of the missing shoes

Chapter 1: The Cold Left Foot

Bernard lived in a very peculiar house. The floorboards groaned like old cellos whenever they were stepped on, and the clocks always ran exactly three minutes backward. While Bernard usually loved the strangeness of his home, he did not like what happened on the "Tuesday of the Vanishing."

Bernard swung his legs out of bed that morning, his left foot hit the floor with a cold shock. He looked down, expecting to find his favourite red sneakers. Instead, there was only one. The right sneaker sat exactly where he had left it, but the left one was gone.



"Maybe the cat dragged it away," Bernard thought. But when he opened his bedroom door, he found his father standing in the hallway looking baffled. His father had his heavy leather work boot on his right foot, while his left foot was covered only by a bright red-dot sock.

"Bernard, have you seen my boot?" his father asked. "I've searched under the sofa, inside the fridge, and even in the umbrella stand. It's simply vanished."

Just then, Bernard's mother stepped out of the kitchen, hopping on one leg. She was wearing a beautiful purple velvet slipper on her right foot, but her left foot was bare. "This is quite impossible," she said, leaning against the wall for balance. "Every single left shoe in this house has disappeared!"

Chapter 2: The Trail of Glowing Moss

Bernard knew this wasn't an accident. A single shoe might get lost, but twenty left shoes? That was a major mystery. He immediately grabbed his Detective Kit, a magnifying glass, a notebook, and a few biscuits in case he got hungry.

He began his investigation on the living room rug. There were no muddy boot prints or signs of a break-in. Instead, he saw something very strange. Deep in the fibers of the carpet were tiny patches of emerald green moss that glowed softly.

As he leaned in closer, a peculiar scent drifted up to his nose. It didn't smell like a thief, it smelled like ancient library books mixed with very strong peppermint.



"Moss and peppermint," Bernard noted in his book. "The thief has very unusual taste."

He followed the trail of glowing moss into the kitchen. There, he saw something that made his eyes widen. His wooden breakfast stool wasn't touching the floor. It was hovering exactly two inches in the air! Tucked under one of the floating legs was a small, curled scrap of birch bark

As soon as Bernard pulled it out, the stool fell to the floor with a loud thwack! On the bark, written in shimmering silver ink, were the words:

“The Left-Side Society requires your assistance. The Grand Hop begins at midnight. Follow the rhythm, Human of the House.”

Chapter 3: The Rhythm in the Attic

Bernard stared at the bark. "Follow the rhythm?" he whispered. He made the house very quiet and listened intently. At first, he heard only the wind. But then, a faint sound began to echo from inside the walls.

Thump-thump-slide...
Thump-thump-slide...

It sounded like someone was dancing to a beat. The sound was coming from the very top of the house, the old attic that hadn't been used in years. Bernard ran up the stairs. The attic door was locked tight. He knew the key was hidden inside the sugar jar in the kitchen. He quickly fetched it and turned the lock.

Creeeeeak... The door opened with a heavy groan.

As the door swung wide, a golden light poured out. Bernard rubbed his eyes. The attic was no longer a dusty storage room. It had been transformed into a massive ballroom! Tiny lanterns made from coconut shells hung from the ceiling, with thousands of fireflies glowing inside them.

But the most amazing sight was the dance. Bernard's red sneaker, his father's work boot, his mother's velvet slipper, and every other missing left shoe in town were there. Each left shoe was dancing all by itself!

"You're a bit late, Bernard!" a tiny, squeaky voice called out.

Sitting on a stack of books was a man no taller than a teapot. He wore a coat made of spider silk and a hat shaped like a silver thimble. He held a tiny wooden baton.

"Who are you?" Bernard asked.

"I am the Conductor of the Left-Side Society," he replied. "Once every hundred years, the left shoes must have a gala. If they don't dance away their grumpiness, they will start pinching toes by tomorrow morning! Would you like to join our party?"



Chapter 4: The Midnight Gala

Bernard didn't hesitate. He kicked off his right shoe and joined the circle, hopping on his left foot. It was a magical feeling. As the shoes tapped on the floorboards, the whole attic vibrated like a musical instrument.

The fireflies changed colours as the Conductor waved his baton.

Bernard watched his red sneaker perform a perfect spin. "I can't believe it," he laughed. "My shoe is a better dancer than I am!"

"This is the Rhythm of Freedom!" the Conductor shouted. "Left shoes are always ignored because the right ones get all the attention. Tonight, they are the stars!"

Bernard danced for hours. He had never been so happy. But as the first light of dawn began to peek through the window, the music faded. The lanterns dimmed, and the peppermint scent turned back into the smell of old dust.

"Until next time, Bernard!" the Conductor whispered, tipping his thimble-hat before vanishing into the shadows.

Chapter 5: The Mystery Solved

When Bernard woke up the next morning, he immediately looked at the floor. A miracle! His red left sneaker was sitting neatly right next to the right one. He ran to the hallway and saw his father's boot and his mother's slipper back in their proper places.

"Look Bernard, the shoes came back!" his mother said in surprise. "I must have been dreaming."

But Bernard knew it wasn't a dream. When he picked up his red sneaker, he found a tiny acorn cap caught in the laces, a piece of a lantern from the night before.

Bernard smiled. From that day on, whenever he walked, he made sure to step firmly and happily with his left foot. He was the only one who knew the secret hidden inside his shoes.

The End

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)

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