



**Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre
High Commission of India
Colombo**

PRESS RELEASE

To commemorate Esala Full Moon Poya 2020, the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), the cultural arm of the High Commission of India, Colombo, organized a webinar of Buddhist scholars from Sri Lanka and India on the evening of 3rd July, 2020 at 5 PM. The topic of the webinar was “Dhamma for Global Well-Being” with special reference to Lord Buddha’s message of “Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhitatta” - may all beings be happy, may all beings be free from suffering.

Buddhism forms one of the most important civilisational links between India and Sri Lanka. Addressing the Dharma Chakra Day celebrations in New Delhi today, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi said that the world fights extraordinary challenges. To these challenges, lasting solutions can come from the ideals of Lord Buddha. They were relevant in the past, are relevant in the present and will remain relevant in the future. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had also visited Sri Lanka during the 2017 International Vesak Day celebrations as Chief Guest. To further strengthen the ties of these shared bonds, High Commission of India marked Poson Poya last month by creating Poson Pavura - an art exhibition by Sri Lankan artists on the walls of the High Commission of India premises.

The panelists from Sri Lanka participating in the webinar marking the Esala Poya day were Venerable Galkande Dhammananda Thero, Head, Department of History, University of Kelaniya; Kala Shuri Dr. Praneeth Abeysundara, an award-winning scholar, and Professor of Sociology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura; Prof. Samantha Ilangakoon, Dean, Faculty of Buddhist Studies and Professor, Department of Religious Studies &

Comparative Philosophy, Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka; and Mr. Daya Dissanayake, an award-winning novelist and poet.

The panelists from India included Dr. Baidyanath Labh, Vice Chancellor, Nav Nalanda Mahavihara (Deemed University), Ministry of Culture, Government of India; Dr. Bimalendra Kumar, Professor and Head, Department of Pali & Buddhist Studies, Banaras Hindu University; Dr. Saswati Mutsuddy, Professor and Head, Department of Pali, University of Calcutta; and Dr. G. B. Harsiha, an award-winning writer, poet, cultural historian and Director of Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Dr. Rewant Vikram Singh, Director, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Colombo, delivered the welcome remarks and moderated the webinar.

The panelists discussed the significance of the Buddha Dhamma for global well-being, particularly considering the current challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlighting the importance of Esala Full Moon Poya day, when Lord Buddha gave the First Sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, at Sarnath, India, the scholars stressed upon the need for compassion and kindness towards each other, and suggested that only through right physical, verbal, and mental actions, as prescribed by Lord Buddha, one can ensure global well-being.

The scholars highlighted the deep socio-religious, cultural and historical relationship between Sri Lanka and India that dates back to more than 2500 years. Esala Full Moon Poya Day being one of such festivals, which reiterate this relationship. It was on this Poya Day Arittha, the nephew of King Devanampiya Tissa, along with 55 others were ordained by Arahant Mahinda Thera, the son of Emperor Ashoka of Magadh, India. This event marked the establishment of Buddha Sasana in Sri Lanka. Also, it was on Esala Poya Day, the Most Venerated Tooth Relic of the Buddha was brought to Sri Lanka from Kalinga, India.

The scholars appreciated the initiative of Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), High Commission of India in Sri Lanka, and requested for many such discussions between scholars of Sri Lanka and India, as well as with other parts of the world.

The panel discussion was webcast live on the Facebook page of Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Colombo.

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